THE TWO BROTHERS.

BROWNSON.

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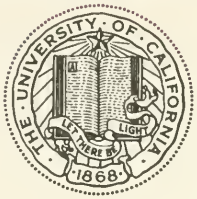

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THE TWO BROTHERS;

—OR—

Why are You a Protestant?

—BY—

O. A. BROWNSON, LL. D.

EDITED BY

HENRY F. BROWNSON, A. M., LL. D.

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THE TWO BROTHERS; OR, WHY ARE YOU A PROTESTANT?

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CHAPTER I.

My old master, Jeremiah Milwood, as I have told you, had but two children, both sons, and with only about two years' difference in their ages. They were his pride, and he spared no pains or expense in their education. He was a stanch Presbyterian; and his highest ambition for his two sons was, that they should become earnest, devoted, and distinguished Presbyterian ministers. He seemed likely to be gratified. Both were of a serious turn, studious and piously inclined. Before the elder had completed his seventeenth year, both became subjects of grace, and both, on leaving college, entered the seminary.

During the second year of their residence in the seminary, their mother, a woman of great strength of character and sweetness of disposition, fell ill and died. From that moment, a striking change was observed in the tone and manner of John, the elder brother. He was his mother's favorite, and shared especially her confidence. At her request, he had spent several hours with her alone just previously to her death, and, though none of us knew what transpired to affect him, it was subsequently surmised, from one or two words which escaped him, that she had expressed, in that trying moment, to him, as the only member of her family she could hope to influence, or to whom she felt able to open her heart, some misgivings as to the truth of Presbyterianism, and had begged him, by his love of her and his regard for the welfare of his soul, to examine thoroughly its foundations before entering the ministry. However this might be, it is certain he was never again what he had been. He returned, after the obsequies, to the seminary, and even remained there several months; but he lost his relish for the prescribed course of studies, and became unwilling to attend the services in the chapel. Finally, he wrote to his father, informing him that he did not wish to

become a Presbyterian minister, and, indeed, could not, without binding himself to profess what he did not then believe and in all probability never should believe, and begging permission to return home and take some other calling. My old master, you know, was never remarkable for his sweetness and amiability, and the recent affliction he suffered in the loss of his wife had rendered him doubly sour and morose. His wrath was terrible. His son had disappointed him, disgraced him, and he replied to him, that, unless he continued at the seminary and returned to his original faith and resolution, he was henceforth no son of his, and must seek a home, father, and friends where he could find them. John, knowing explanation or expostulation would be vain, took the only alternative left him, and suffered himself to be exiled from his home. James, the younger brother, who in many respects resembled his father, remained at the seminary and completed his course.

John withdrew to a distant part of the country, assumed his mother's name, and supported himself for three or four years by teaching at an academy. While teaching he contrived to study law, in the practice of which he subsequently engaged, distinguished himself, and, in a few years, amassed a fortune adequate to his simple wants and tastes. Having done this, he retired from business and went abroad. James, on completing his course, was licensed to preach, and in a few months was called and ordained to the pastoral charge of a wealthy and influential congregation in one of our principal Atlantic cities, and was soon known and esteemed as one of the leading ministers of his denomination. About a year after his settlement, his father died and left him the bulk of his estate, which was considerable; and a year later he married the beautiful and accomplished daughter and heiress of his richest parishioner, who brought him a still more ample fortune, and became the mother of five children, two sons and three daughters. Every thing prospered with him, and he had all that heart could wish. But, after a while, the tide of prosperity began to ebb; death visited his home, and his children, one by one, all, save the youngest, who was deformed, sickly, and partially idiotic, were taken from him, and at length his wife followed them. He bore up with stoical fortitude against these repeated blows, but he felt them,—was forced to reflect on the certainty of death, the uncertainty of life, and the perishable nature of all earthly goods, more seriously than he had ever

done before, and to some extent his heart was softened and his spirit bowed.

Time had hardly worn off the wire-edge of his grief and begun to heal the wound in his heart, when he was surprised by a letter from his brother, whom he had neither seen nor heard from for nearly thirty years. The letter offered him such sympathy and consolation as befitted the occasion, and brought him the intelligence that its writer was about to revisit his native land, and, following the yearnings of his heart, would hasten to embrace the brother he had never for a moment forgotten, or ceased to love. James received the letter with mixed emotions, but upon the whole without displeasure, and looked forward even with interest to his brother's return. In a few weeks after sending his letter, John embarked, and, favored with a short and pleasant voyage across the Atlantic, landed in the city in which James was settled, and without delay drove with his baggage to his brother's residence. The brothers met; but so altered in appearance was each, that it was with difficulty that either could recognize his brother in the other. The meeting was frank and cordial on the part of the elder, and less cold and restrained on the part of the younger than could have been expected from his general character. Perhaps he had recently had some compunctious visitings of conscience for having so long forgotten even to think of one he was bound by the ties of nature to love; perhaps he had a vein of tenderness in his nature which had not hitherto been observed, and that early scenes and early recollections revived, and for the moment half subdued, the sectarian and minister. But be this as it may, he was not displeased to meet his brother. They were soon seated in a well-furnished apartment, engaged in free and familiar conversation. They recalled their boyish days and boyish frolics, spoke of their college life and college companions, and finally of their mother and her lamented death. The tone of both was subdued, and they turned their conversation upon death, sin, redemption, the resurrection, and immortal life. While speaking on these awful and sublime topics, John referred to the change which early came over him with regard to his religious views, and stated that he was, and for years had been, a member of the Roman Catholic Church. This was unexpected as well as unwelcome news to James. If his brother had told him that he had become a Socinian or even an unbeliever, he would not

have been surprised, and could have borne it; but to be told that he, the principal mover of the Protestant league for the conversion of the pope and the overthrow of popery, had himself a brother who had turned Papist, was more than he could bear. He was thunderstruck, and seemed for some minutes as one bereft of thought and sense. Never had he been known to be so overcome. At length, he partially recovered, and said to his brother,—"Mr. Milwood, your room is ready; I must wrestle with God in prayer for you before I can speak to you again." John bade him good night, and quietly retired to his room. It was already late in the evening, and, offering a prayer for his brother, another for the repose of the soul of his mother, and commending himself to his heavenly Father and the protection of our Lady and all the saints, he composed himself, with a subdued but serene mind, to rest.

CHAPTER II.

THE brothers met again in the morning in the breakfast-parlor. James was exteriorly composed, and greeted his brother in his blandest tone; but a careful observer would have suspected that he intended to play the part of the civil and courteous host, rather than that of the warm and affectionate brother. Breakfast passed pretty much in silence. John was disposed to wait the motions of his brother, and James was undecided whether to broach the Catholic question or not. But he could not converse freely with his brother on indifferent matters; he felt that sooner or later he must discuss the question, and perhaps the sooner the better. Revolving the matter for some time in his mind, he at length, throwing aside the morning paper he had been pretending to read, broke the silence by remarking to his brother:—

"So it seems the result has been that you have turned Papist?"

"I am a *Catholic*," replied John, with a slight emphasis on the last word, intended as a quiet rebuke to his brother for employing a nickname.

"It is strange! What in the world could have induced the son of a Presbyterian father, piously brought up, well instructed in the Protestant religion, and not wanting in natural ability, to take a step so foolish, not to say so wicked?"

"Let me rather ask my brother why he is a Protestant?"

"Why I am a Protestant?"

"Yes; I am much mistaken, or that is the harder question of the two to answer."

"I am a Protestant because the Romish Church is corrupt, the Mystery of Iniquity, the Man of Sin, Antichrist, the Whore of Babylon, drunk with the blood of the saints, a cage of unclean birds, cruel, oppressive, tyrannical, superstitious, idolatrous——"

"But you are simply telling me why you are not a Catholic; my question is, Why are you a Protestant?"

"Protestantism is a solemn protest against Rome, and my reasons for not being a Catholic are my reasons for being a Protestant."

"Jews, pagans, Mahometans, deists, atheists, protest as earnestly as you do against Rome; are they therefore Protestants?"

"Protestantism is, indeed, a protest against Rome; but it is also a positive religion."

"Unaffected by supposing the Catholic Church to have never been or to have ceased to be?"

"Yes; Protestantism is independent of Romanism."

"A Protestant is one who embraces Protestantism in this independent, positive sense?"

"Yes, if we speak properly."

"Before telling me why you are a Protestant, it will be necessary to tell what, in this sense, Protestantism is."

"It is the religion of the Bible;—the Bible is the religion of Protestants."

"And the religion of the Bible is——?"

"The truths revealed in the Bible."

"And these are——?"

"The great evangelical doctrines asserted by the reformers against the false and corrupt doctrines of Rome, and which we commonly call the doctrines of grace."

"These doctrines are Protestantism?"

"They are."

"So Protestantism is the religion of the Bible, and the religion of the Bible is Protestantism!"

"There is nothing absurd or ridiculous in that. Protestantism, Sir, *is* the religion of the Bible, of the whole Bible, the Bible alone,—that precious gift of God to man,—the word of God, the charter of our liberties, the source of redemption, the ground of the Christian's hope, carrying light

and life, the blessings of truth, freedom, and civilization, wherever it goes; and which you Papists, with characteristic cunning, lock up from the people, because you know full well, that, were they once to read it for themselves, they would make short work with the pope and his minions, break their covenant with death and hell, and put an end to their blasphemies, idolatries, and oppressions."

"I suspect, brother, you have accommodated that from the speech you made at the last anniversary of the American Bible Society. It may do very well to address to the mob that collects on 'anniversary week'; but can you not give me a clear, distinct, and precise statement of what Protestantism really is?"

"Protestantism is the great truth asserted by the reformers against Rome, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain all things necessary to salvation, and that they are the sole and sufficient rule of faith and practice."

"If I believe the Scriptures are sufficient, and are the sole rule of faith and practice, do I believe the whole of Protestantism?"

"No; you must also believe the word of God as contained in the Scriptures."

"And this word consists of certain *credenda* or propositions to be believed?"

"It does; and these may all be summed up in the text, —'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'"

"To believe *on* the Lord Jesus Christ is to believe——?"

"The truths he has revealed, whether of himself, or other things."

"These truths are——?"

"The great evangelical doctrines asserted by the reformers."

"That is, they are Protestantism. Therefore, Protestantism is—Protestantism! But can you not be a little more particular, and tell me what these truths or doctrines are?"

"You will find an excellent summary of them in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms."

"That is, they are Presbyterianism? Protestantism, then, is Presbyterianism."

"What else, from my profession as a Presbyterian minister, should you infer to be my belief?"

"I am rather slow to infer a Presbyterian minister's belief from his profession. But, if Protestantism be Presbyterianism, none but Presbyterians can be Protestants. Is this your belief?"

"Not exactly; for there are Protestants who are not Presbyterians."

"These, of course, differ more or less from Presbyterians, or else they would be Presbyterians. Consequently Protestantism must differ more or less from Presbyterianism."

"In non-essentials, but not in essentials. All who embrace the essentials are Protestants."

"Do Catholics embrace the essentials?"

"According to the general opinion of Protestants, they do."

"Then, according to the general opinion of Protestants, Catholics are Protestants?"

"But I think differently, and our General Assembly will soon, I hope, solemnly declare that Rome does not retain even the essentials of the Christian faith."

"That will be a sad day for Rome, no doubt; but what, in your judgment, are the essentials?"

"They are the great evangelical doctrines of the reformation, embraced by all orthodox Protestants."

"And *orthodox* Protestants are——?"

"All who agree in accepting the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the great essential doctrines of revelation."

"Which means that the essential doctrines are the essential doctrines, and orthodox Protestants are orthodox Protestants."

"The essential doctrines are substantially what is held by Presbyterians."

"Those orthodox Protestants who are not Presbyterians differ from Presbyterians only in relation to non-essentials?"

"That is all."

"Presbyterianism, or, what is the same thing, the orthodox faith, then, is made up of two parts, one essential, the other non-essential?"

"All parts of the orthodox faith are not alike essential. But there may be differences which are not differences of faith. The Congregationalists, Evangelical Episcopalians, Dutch Reformed, the Calvinistic Baptists, &c., differ from us in matters of discipline and church government, while they embrace substantially the same faith we do."

"Is infant baptism a matter of faith?"

"Not strictly."

"Then you do not baptize infants because you believe Almighty God commands you to baptize them?"

"We do; but the point is not so essential, that those who differ from us must needs err essentially."

"One may, then, reject a positive command of God, without essential error?"

"We think our Baptist brethren err grievously; but, as they hold the great cardinal doctrines of the Gospel, we do not think their error is absolutely essential. In the present state of the religious world, it is the duty of God's people to make the platform of Christian union as broad as possible, to discountenance theological wranglings, to seek to heal sectarian divisions, and to follow after the things which make for peace."

"But if you had no fears of popery, and felt that your own sect had the power to make converts, I suppose you would regard the Baptists as of the number of those who bring in 'damnable heresies.'"

"You are ungenerous; I regret the unsoundness of my Baptist brethren, but I do not consider them as essentially wrong."

"Not even when they deny you the Christian character, by denying that your baptism is baptism,—and when they refuse to commune with you, on the ground that you are unbaptized persons; that is, infidels, in the proper sense of the word?"

"There they are wrong; but still not essentially so, because baptism itself is a non-essential."

"Then you do not agree in opinion with our Lord, who says, 'Unless a man be born again of *water* and of the Holy Ghost, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?'"

"Christian doctrines are distinguishable into fundamentals and non-fundamentals. The fundamentals are the essentials, the non-fundamentals are the non-essentials. All who believe the former are substantially orthodox, though they may differ about the latter."

"The non-fundamentals are either revealed truths, or they are not. If they are not, your distinction of fundamentals and non-fundamentals is simply a distinction between what is revealed and what is not revealed, between the word of God and the words of men or of devils; and, on this supposition, the essentials will be what God has revealed, and the non-essentials what he has not revealed. If they are

revealed truths, you imply that a portion of the revealed word is unessential, and may be disbelieved or rejected without essential error. Which do you say?"

"Suppose we say they are no portion of the revealed word?"

"You cannot say that, because you have declared them to be revealed truths, by asserting that *Christian* doctrines are distinguishable into fundamentals and non-fundamentals. But pass over this. If you say the non-fundamentals, that is, the non-essentials, are not revealed truths, you imply, by making the fundamentals essential to be believed, that the *whole* revealed word is essential to be believed, and therefore deny that there can be any differences of opinion as to any portion of what is revealed, without essential error, which renders your distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals of no avail; since no one, unless a Protestant, is likely to contend that any thing more than what is revealed is essential to be believed. Is it not so?"

"So it appears."

"Then again, you say, men, though differing about the non-essentials, that is, about what is not revealed, are substantially orthodox, if they believe the essentials, that is, what is revealed. Now they may differ about the non-essentials, by believing, some, that they are, and some, that they are not, revealed truths, or portions of the word of God, as we see in the case of you and the Baptists concerning infant baptism; you believing it to be revealed and commanded by God himself, they believing it not revealed and implicitly forbidden. Now, if men may believe the non-essentials to be revealed, they may, according to you, without essential error, believe that to be the word of God which is the word of men or of devils. Do you admit this?"

"Of course not. 'Cursed is every one that addeth to the words of this book.' The condemnation of Rome is not so much that she denies the essential truths of the Christian religion, as that she overlays them by her corrupt additions, and renders them of none effect through the traditions of men. It is as much an error to add to the word as to take from it."

"Then you abandon this supposition, and take the other, —that the non-essentials are revealed truths, portions of the word of God?"

"Be it so, for the present."

"Then you must say, since you allow men to believe or reject them, without essential error, that a portion of the word of God, of the truth Almighty God has revealed, may be denied without essential error. Do you hold that one can be substantially orthodox, and yet deny a portion of God's word?"

"Even your own doctors distinguish between fundamentals and non-fundamentals, and teach that faith in the fundamentals suffices for salvation."

"This, even if true, would not avail you; for our doctors are no authority for you, and you cannot urge them against me in this discussion, since I am not defending the church. But it is not true. Our doctors distinguish between the articles of the creed which are logically fundamental or primary, and those which are secondary, I admit; but they do not teach that faith in the primary alone suffices for salvation. They teach that the *whole* must be believed, either explicitly or implicitly, and simply add, that *explicit* faith in the primary articles, with implicit faith in the secondary, is all that is necessary, *necessitate medii*."

"That is all I ask. He who believes explicitly the primary believes implicitly the secondary; for the primary imply the secondary."

"So, on the other hand, he who explicitly *dis*believes the secondary, implicitly disbelieves the primary; for the secondary presuppose or imply the primary. No man believes implicitly what he explicitly denies. But you hold the non-fundamentals may be explicitly denied without essential error; therefore, you cannot assume that they are implicitly believed."

"But do you pretend that every thing, however unimportant or insignificant, is essential to be believed?"

"Your faith, not mine, is the matter in question."

"As a Catholic, you are bound to hold that the book of Tobias is the word of God. In that book I read that Toby had a dog, and that the dog came to his master, wagging his tail. Is it essential to your salvation, that you believe with a firm faith that Toby really had a dog, and that the dog actually did wag his tail?"

"That is not precisely the question. Assuming the inspiration of the book, can you *deny* the fact without essential error?"

"Why not? Common sense teaches us that the fact is not and cannot be in itself essential."

"And do you hold that there can be essential error only where the matter denied is in itself essential?"

"How can there be?"

"What, in *religious* or divine faith, is the immediate object believed?"

"The truth of the particular proposition, whatever it may be."

"Not exactly; for the faith is *religious* only where the proposition believed is a *revealed* proposition."

"The truth of the particular *revealed* proposition, then, whatever it may be."

"In believing, does the mind perceive the truth of the proposition believed, or only the proposition itself?"

"Explain yourself."

"What is faith, as distinguished from knowledge or science?"

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

"Or, as says St. Augustine,—*Fides est credere quod non vides*,—Faith is to believe what you do not see. But you must see or mentally apprehend the proposition, or you cannot assent to it. What, then, is that in the proposition which you assent to, but which you do not see?"

"The truth of the proposition."

"As in the proposition, 'God exists in unity of essence and trinity of persons,' you distinctly and immediately apprehend the proposition, but not its truth; otherwise, it would be a proposition, not of faith, but of knowledge or science,—knowledge, if perceived intuitively; science, if perceived only by means of discursion. Hence, rationalists, when they refuse to believe the mysteries of faith because they cannot immediately perceive their truth, deny, virtually, the possibility of faith, and fall into the absurdity of contending that they cannot have faith, unless it be knowledge or science; that is, they cannot have faith unless faith be impossible! Where there is sight, there is not faith. Hence we say, faith will lose itself in sight, hope be swallowed in fruition, but charity abideth for ever. I immediately perceive the propositions of faith, or the *credenda;* but not their intrinsic truth. Therefore, the *truth* of the revealed proposition cannot be that which is *immediately* believed or assented to."

"So it would seem."

"If it is not *immediately* believed, it must be *mediately*

believed; that is, must be believed *in* some thing else, *on* or by some authority at least formally distinct from itself."

"That must be true; for faith is always by some authority distinct from the believer and the proposition believed."

"Then the *immediate* object believed will be, not the intrinsic truth of the proposition, but this authority in, on, or by means of which it is believed?"

"Be it so."

"Now, in *religious* faith, what is this?"

"The Bible, as all Protestants contend, in opposition to Romanists, who say it is the church."

"Catholics do not say the church is the authority for believing the *truth* of the revealed proposition, but simply for believing it is a revealed proposition; and, if you reflect a moment, you must admit that the Bible is at best only authority for believing this or that is revealed, not authority for believing that what is revealed is true."

"We recognize no authority above the Bible."

"Then you place the Bible above God himself, which I own is what you who call yourselves Protestants often have the appearance of doing; but this cannot be your meaning. All you can mean is, that, in determining what God has revealed, the Bible is the highest authority you recognize. But the Bible, although assumed to be the highest authority for determining what God has revealed, is yet no authority for saying what he reveals is true. Why do you believe what God reveals in or through the Bible is true?"

"Because it is his revelation, his word."

"That is, you believe it because God says it. But, in believing it because God says it, what is it you *immediately* believe?"

"God himself."

"That is, you believe the proposition because it is God's word, and you believe his word because you believe him. But why do you believe him?"

"Because it is impossible for him to lie."

"That is, because he is infinitely true, is truth itself, and can neither deceive nor be deceived?"

"I have no objection to that."

"Then the object immediately believed, in believing a revealed proposition, is the infinite truth or veracity of God who reveals it."

"Be it so."

"Which, in religious faith, then, shall we say is the more

essential point to be believed,—the matter revealed, or the infinite veracity of God who reveals it?"

"What is the difference?"

"The difference, perhaps, will appear, if you tell me what it is that makes the faith *religious* faith, or distinguishes it, as *religious* faith, from all other kinds of faith."

"It is religious faith because the proposition believed is a *revealed* proposition."

"If I believe the proposition, 'God exists in unity of essence and trinity of persons,' because you teach it, or because I think I have discovered and demonstrated it by my own reason, is my belief religious belief?"

"Why not, since the proposition in either case is the same? What difference can it make, if it be believed, for what reason or on what ground it is believed?"

"If I believe it because you teach it, I believe you, and what I immediately believe is that you are a man of truth and worthy of credit. Is there any thing religious in my believing you?"

"Not necessarily."

"If I believe it because I think I have discovered and demonstrated it by my own reason, I simply believe my own reason. Is to believe my own reason religious belief?"

"Certainly not."

"For, if it were, every belief, whether intuitive or scientific, would be religious, and the belief of falsehood as much as truth; since, in every act of belief, whether the belief be well founded or not, I believe my reason. But if I believe the proposition, not because you teach it, not because I discover or demonstrate it by my own reason, but because God says it, and therefore because I believe him, and that he is infinitely true, and can neither deceive me nor be deceived, and, furthermore, because he commands me to believe it, is my act now religious?"

"It is."

"Then it would seem that it is believing and obeying God, which makes the belief *religious* belief?"

"That appears to be so."

"Then the more essential point in *religious* belief is not simply belief of the matter revealed, but of God who reveals it?"

"Very well, let it be so."

"In every proposition, be it what it may, which I believe because God reveals it, I do believe him, do I not?"

"So it follows from what we have said."

"But if the more essential point is to believe God, the more essential error must be to disbelieve him, must it not?"

"Certainly, to disbelieve God is the most heinous offence of which man can be guilty. The grossest insult we can offer even to a fellow-mortal is to call him a liar; and we call God a liar, whenever we disbelieve or refuse to believe him."

"But do I not disbelieve or refuse to believe God, and therefore make God a liar, whenever I refuse to believe a proposition because I have only his word for it?"

"You do, and are guilty of the sin of infidelity."

"Then, if God has told me, no matter for what reason, that Toby had a dog and the dog wagged his tail, and I refuse to believe it, do I or do I not err essentially?"

"You err essentially, as it appears from what we have said."

"Then there may be essential error, where the matter or proposition denied is not in itself essential?"

"So it would seem."

"Then you will concede what you call the non-fundamentals, if revealed truths, can no more be denied without essential error than the fundamentals themselves?"

"Not at all. Doubtless, where the matter is clearly and manifestly revealed, refusal to believe is essential error; but it does not therefore follow that it is essential error to refuse to believe, where it is not clearly and manifestly revealed, where it is uncertain that God speaks, and, if he does, what is the exact meaning of what he says."

"This uncertainty, not the fundamental or non-fundamental nature of the matter in question, then, is that which saves the refusal to believe from being essential error?"

"That seems to follow."

"If the same uncertainty existed with regard to what is fundamental, the refusal to believe it would, then, no more be essential, than the refusal to believe the non-fundamentals?"

"That seems also to follow."

"In order, then to determine what are the essentials, that is, what must be believed, and cannot be denied without essential error, and what are the non-essentials, that is, what without essential error may be either believed or denied, it will be necessary to inquire, not what are the fundamentals

and what the non-fundamentals, but what is or is not clearly and manifestly revealed."

"Since the fundamentals are all clearly and manifestly revealed, I have no objections to saying so."

"Whether the fundamentals are all clearly and manifestly revealed or not, you must so say, or abandon the ground you have taken. The essentials, then, are what is clearly and manifestly revealed?"

"Be it so."

"The non-essentials what is not clearly and manifestly revealed?"

"Agreed."

"He who believes all that is clearly and manifestly revealed believes all the essentials, is free from essential error, is substantially orthodox?"

"Agreed, again."

"He who rejects any truth clearly and manifestly revealed errs essentially?"

"He does."

"But he who rejects only the non-essentials does not err essentially?"

"Stop there a moment. Men may differ as to the non-essentials without essential error; but to differ in opinion about a point is not necessarily to deny it; for both parties may intend to believe it, and would, if they could only ascertain the truth involved."

"But individuals may differ in some respects, even as to matters of faith, from Presbyterians, without erring essentially?"

"I do not deny it."

"The points on which they differ must be non-essentials, otherwise the difference would be essential. In regard to these points they must differ from Presbyterians, either by holding some things to be revealed truths which Presbyterians do not, or by denying some things to be revealed truths which Presbyterians believe are revealed truths?"

"They may also differ from them by simple ignorance."

"That is true; but then they differ only negatively, not positively. Presbyterians in this respect must differ from one another; for some are better informed as to what Presbyterianism is than others are or can be; but they are, nevertheless, all alike Presbyterians. So I, as a Catholic, may be ignorant of some points of the Catholic faith, and in this respect *differ* from the one who knows them all; but I am

as true a Catholic as he, because I intend to believe all the Church teaches, because I am ready to believe all as soon as explicitly propounded to me, and because the points on which I am ignorant I believe implicitly, since they are implied in what I believe explicitly. This is, therefore, a mere negative difference, and amounts to nothing. The differences in question are positive differences, and these must consist, either in believing things to be revealed which you deny to be revealed, or in denying certain things to be revealed which you believe to be revealed."

"I do not see how that follows."

"The differences we are considering concern matters of faith; and nothing, I suppose you will grant, is or can be matter of faith which is not a divinely revealed truth. Or, rather, no man can hold any thing to be matter of faith, unless he holds it to be matter of revelation, that is, a revealed truth."

"I do not know about that."

"But you do; for the faith we are speaking of is *religious* faith, and we have agreed that there can be *religious* faith only where the proposition believed is a *revealed* proposition."

"Very well, proceed."

"If, then, you admit differences as to matters of faith may exist without essential error, you must admit that the non-essentials may be either believed or *dis*believed without essential error, unless you choose to admit that you yourselves are in essential error."

"How so?"

"You certainly deny some things, which you call non-essentials, to be revealed truths; such, for instance, as the divine institution of the episcopacy, which is asserted by Protestant Episcopalians. But, if the non-essentials cannot be denied without essential error, then you err essentially in denying it. On the other hand, you assert infant baptism to be a divine command, which your Baptist brethren deny. Infant baptism, you say, is a non-essential; if, then, non-essentials cannot be positively denied without essential error, your Baptist brethren err essentially, and are not, as you have admitted, substantially orthodox. Moreover, unless you admit the non-essentials may be either believed or disbelieved without essential error, your distinction between essentials and non-essentials avails you nothing, and you must come back and assert that none, who differ positively in any mat-

ter from Presbyterians, have or can have the essential faith; and then you must recall your denial, and say that Presbyterianism and Protestantism are one and the same thing, and that Presbyterians are the only Protestants."

"Very well, I will not insist on the point. Say the non-essentials are matters which one may either believe or disbelieve without erring essentially."

"We now seem to be in a fair way of determining what Protestantism is. It is, you say, the essentials, and the essentials are all the truths clearly and manifestly revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Tell me what these truths are, and you tell me what Protestantism is, and take the preliminary step towards answering my question, Why are you a Protestant?"

CHAPTER III.

Much to the relief of James, while he was considering what he should reply to John's last demand, the conversation was suspended by the entrance of Mr. Wilson, a brother Presbyterian minister, settled over the oldest Presbyterian congregation in the city. He was of Scottish descent, and upwards of seventy years of age,—a man of antiquated notions, with little respect for the younger ministers of his denomination. Presbyterianism, in his view, had nearly lost its original distinctive character. Wesley and Whitefield, by their appeals to heated passion and mere animal excitement, instead of reason and voluntary affection, had well nigh ruined it. Presbyterians were now Methodists, Arminians, in all except name and outward organization and government; and the new methods and measures lately adopted for the conversion of sinners appeared to him likely to prove in the end its total destruction. He saw with pain the lecture-room and rostrum superseding the pulpit, strolling evangelists and revival preachers the regular pastors, and "inquiry" and "anxious" meetings the orderly ministrations of the word.

Between him and James there was little sympathy. James was a man of his times. He understood the tendencies of his age and country, and held that it was the part of wisdom, if not indeed of duty, to yield to and obey them. To have power over the people, he held it to be necessary to consult them, to change with them, to take the direction they indicate, to be always just in advance of them, and never to

lag behind them. He availed himself of their passions and tendencies as the readiest way of occupying the post of leader, and, if he could only occupy that post, the direction he followed or the final goal he might reach was comparatively indifferent. He was adroit, shrewd, unscrupulous, but he did not know that he who leads the mob only by yielding to them leads them only by being their slave. The true leader is he who makes the multitude follow him, not he who follows them. He who has principles and will stand by them, though he stand alone, or be hewn down by the maddened multitude for his fidelity to them, is by many degrees superior to him who sacrifices his principles, if he have any, to popularity, or who has no principles but to ascertain and yield to the passions and tendencies of the age or country. But of all this James knew, at least, cared, nothing. He lived in an age and country of demagogues, and he did not aspire to be thought superior to his age and compatriots. The greatest modern achievement in the state, he was accustomed to hear it boasted, had been to establish the rule of demagogues; and why should it not be as glorious to establish this rule in the church as in the state?

Little as James sympathized ordinarily with Mr. Wilson, he welcomed him in the present instance with great cordiality, and introduced him to his brother. After some commonplace remarks, he told him he had just learned that his brother, who had been absent for many years, had become a Catholic. He recapitulated the conversation they had just had, stated the point at which it had arrived, and begged Mr. Wilson to answer the question they were debating. Mr. Wilson was not pleased with the course adopted by James, and replied:—

"If I had had the management of this discussion from the beginning, I should have given it another direction. Your brother has, doubtless, been under the training of the Jesuits, is versed in all their scholastic refinements and subtilties, and a perfect master of all the sophistical arts by which they entrap and bewilder the simple and unwary. When you dispute with such a man, mind and keep the management of the argument in your own hands. Consent to ply the laboring oar yourself, and you are gone. The great secret of dialectics is in knowing how to put your questions. You gentlemen of the modern school are far abler demagogues than logicians, and much better skilled in exciting the passions of the mob than in managing a dis-

cussion. I have often told you the folly and madness of neglecting severer studies. You have studied only to conform to the multitude; you have made the mob supreme, and taught them to lord it over their pastors, loosened them from their old moorings, set them adrift upon a stormy and tempestuous sea, without helm or helmsman, or rather with the helmsman bound to obey the helm. Their passions are a favorable gale for you to-day; but what certainty have you that they may not make the port of Rome, or be stranded on the rocky beach of popery, to-morrow? Attempt to guide or control them, cross in any thing their prejudices or their wishes, and where are they,—where are you? How often must I tell you, it is hard making the port of the Gospel with the devil for pilot? If you had had a grain of common sense, you would have insisted on your brother's answering your question, why he had become a Catholic, instead of consenting, as a great fool, to answer his question, why you are a Protestant. If you had been acquainted with the old Protestant controversialists, you would have seen that they leave Protestantism to take care of itself, while they reserve all their forces for the attack upon Rome."

"Never mind that now, Brother Wilson. I could hardly foresee the turn the conversation would take, for those Catholics I have known have generally contented themselves with replying to the charges brought against their church, without going far in their attacks upon Protestantism; and besides, it is no more than right, since Protestantism is a positive religion, that they who profess it should define what they mean by it, and give their reasons for believing it."

"If the old Protestant masters of whom Mr. Wilson speaks," interposed John, "had thought of that, and, before attacking Catholicity, had defined and established a religion of their own, my brother would have had an easy task now, if indeed any task at all."

"The true polemical policy is always to keep yourself and party on the offensive; but if you imagine that Protestantism, as a positive religion, is indefinable and indefensible, you are very much mistaken."

"The readiest way to convict me of that will be to define it, and give me good and valid reasons for believing it."

"In becoming a Catholic you abjured Protestantism. Am I to infer that you abjured you knew not what?"

"Mr. Wilson pays me but a sorry compliment, if he supposes I shall voluntarily surrender what he terms the true polemical policy. The question is not what I may or may not know of Protestantism, what I may or may not have abjured, on becoming a Catholic, but what Protestantism is, as understood by those who profess it?"

"But, if you were not fully informed as to what Protestantism really was, how could you know that in abjuring it you were not abjuring the truth?"

"He who has the truth has no need of knowing the systems opposed to it, in order to know that they must be false. But suppose you proceed with your definition. You profess to be a Protestant, and so able, experienced, and learned a man cannot be supposed to profess to believe he knows not what. If you know what it is, you can easily tell me."

"I will give you Dr. Owen's definition. I dare say your brother James has never read Owen's works, nor Boston's, nor those of any other man who was in breeches fifty years ago. It is a shame to think how the old worthies are neglected. Nobody reads them now-a-days. The study of school divinity is wholly neglected. Our theologians are frightened at a folio, tremble at a quarto, can hardly endure even an octavo. The demand is for works, 'short, pithy, and pungent.' It is the age of petty Tracts, Penny Magazines, Peter Parleys, Robert Merrys, trash, nonsense, and humbug."

"And yet it is the glorious age on which the glorious sun of the glorious reformation beams in all its effulgence. If the reformers were here, they would exclaim, *Et tu, Brute!*"

"I hope Mr. Wilson will not heed my brother's sneer," interposed James; "but proceed with his definition."

"Brother Milwood, have you Owen's works? No? No, I dare say not. But I presume you have Dowling, D'Aubigné, and the last new novel."

"I do not read novels."

"The best thing you have said for yourself yet. Well, I see I must quote from memory. Protestantism,—remember I quote the *great* Dr. Owen, one of those sound old English divines who cared as little for prelacy as for papacy, and would no more submit to king than to pope. They were the men. It will be long before we shall look upon their like again. They were God's freemen. The pomps and vanities of the world could not dazzle or blind them. They cared not for crown or mitre, and the blood of a king

was to them as the blood of a common man. They went straight to their object. England was not worthy of them. The Lord directed them here. Here they laid the foundations of a noble empire. This is their work; this land is their land, and their children's after them, and a crying shame is it, that a miserable, idolatrous Papist should be suffered to pollute it with his accursed foot."

"But you are thinking of the Independents, rather than of the Presbyterians. The Presbyterians were for king and covenant, and pretend to have disapproved of the execution of Charles Stuart."

"No matter. The Independents only completed what the Presbyterians began, and soon sunk into insignificance when left to struggle alone. In the glorious war against prelacy and papacy they were united as brothers, as I trust will always be their children."

"But the definition."

"Remember, I quote the words of the great Dr. Owen, great and good, notwithstanding he left the Presbyterians and became a Congregationalist;—excepting in matters of church government, rigidly orthodox, and as much superior to the degenerate race of ministers in our day, as a huge old folio is to a modern penny tract, and whose works I recommend to both of you to read. Protestantism is,—'1. What was revealed unto the church by our Lord and his apostles, and is the whole of that religion which the Lord doth and will accept. 2. *So far as* needed unto faith, obedience, and salvation of the church, what they taught, revealed, and commanded is contained in the Scriptures of the New Testament, witnessed unto and confirmed by the Old. 3. All that is required, that we may please God, and be accepted with him, and come to the eternal enjoyment of him, is that we truly and sincerely believe what is so revealed and taught, yielding sincere obedience unto what is commanded in the Scriptures. 4. If in any thing they [Protestants] be found to deviate from them, if it [what they teach] exceed in any instance what is so taught and commanded, if it be defective in the faith or the practice of any thing so revealed or commanded, they are ready to renounce it.' What do you ask more clear, brief, comprehensive, and precise than that?"

"Did our Lord and his apostles reveal any religion which they did not reveal to the church, or which God doth not and will not accept?"

"Of course not."

"Then Mr. Owen might have said simply, Protestantism is what was revealed by our Lord and his apostles unto the church."

"Perhaps he might."

"What was so revealed is the true religion, is it not?"

"It is."

"Then he would have said all, if he had said, Protestantism is the true religion."

"Be it so."

"If you will now tell me what is the true religion, you will tell me what Protestantism is."

"Mr. Owen tells you in his second article."

"I beg your pardon. He tells me in that *where* the true religion is, so far as needed; but not *what* it is."

"In his third article, then."

"Not in that; for in that he simply tells me, that, if I believe and obey the true religion, so far as contained in the Scriptures of the New Testament, I have all that God requires of me."

"Well, in the fourth."

"But that simply informs me, that, if Protestants have mistaken the true religion, if they contend for more or for less than is contained in the Scriptures, they are ready to renounce *it;* although whether by *it* is to be understood true religion, the mistake, the excess, or the defect, he does not inform me. So, you perceive, I am not as yet told what Protestantism is."

"But you are told *where* it is, and that is enough."

"That may or may not be. The cook knew *where* the teakettle was when it fell overboard, but nevertheless he could not get it to make the captain's tea."

"It is in the New Testament, witnessed unto and confirmed by the Old. You can go there and find it for yourself."

"Has it any mark by which I may recognize it when I see it?"

"If you seek, you shall find. Our Lord himself says that, and I hope you will not dispute him."

"Does he say, if you seek *in the Scriptures of the New Testament*, you shall find?"

"Not expressly."

"Do all who seek in those Scriptures find?"

"All who faithfully study them and rightly understand them."

"Do all who attentively read them rightly understand them?"

"No; some wrest them to their own destruction, and bring in damnable heresies."

"You have faithfully studied and rightly understand them?"

"I think so."

"Lest I should be one of those who wrest them to my own destruction, suppose you tell me what is the true religion which they contain, or which I ought to find in them."

"If you are one who would wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction, you would do the same with my statement of what they contain. I should do you no good by complying with your request. If you believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will you believe me."

"How, then, am I ever to know certainly what this thing you call Protestantism, and say is the true religion, really is?"

"Read your Bible, Sir, with humble submission, without any reliance on yourself, with sincere and earnest prayer to the Holy Ghost to enlighten you, and you will be led into all truth."

"Perhaps so. But our question is not, What is truth? but, What is Protestantism?"

"Have I not told you Protestantism is the true religion? He, then, who is led to the truth must needs be led to Protestantism."

"I stand corrected. But since some do wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, and bring in 'damnable heresies,' how do you determine infallibly that you may not yourself be one of them?"

"I am accustomed, Sir, to being treated with respect, and I trust you mean me no insult."

"They who are accustomed to be treated with respect are, in general, slow to think themselves insulted. If Mr. Wilson does not know infallibly that he rightly understands the Scriptures, he cannot deny that it is possible he may be wresting them to his own destruction."

"Through God's distinguishing grace vouchsafed to me, for no worthiness of mine, I have been enabled to see and know the truth."

"Is that same grace vouchsafed to all?"

"To all whom God has preordained unto everlasting life; but those whom he has from all eternity reprobated to everlasting death, for the praise of his vindictive justice, he leaves to their reprobate sense, to their own blindness, and even sends them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie and be damned."

"And these never had it in their power to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved?"

"If they had willed."

"Were they ever able to have willed?"

"Naturally, yes; morally, no."

"But actually?"

"No. Those whom God ordains to everlasting death he ordains to sin, that they may be damned justly."

"That is a hard doctrine, Brother Wilson. It was taught indeed by the great Calvin, whom God so highly favored, but it is not now generally taught by Presbyterians. The doctrine of God's decrees is, indeed, full of sweet comfort to the elect, but it needs to be handled with great prudence, and is to be meditated in our closets rather than made the basis of our instructions to others. Sinners do not and cannot understand it. They only make a mock of it, and it proves to them the savor of death unto death."

"There it is! The time has come when the people will no longer hear sound doctrine, when it is *imprudent* to declare the whole counsel of God. Hence the race of weak and puny saints, who must be fed on milk, and that diluted. Very well, I must leave you to manage the discussion in your own way; but be on your guard. The time is not far distant, if things proceed as they have done for a few years back, when you will have no Protestantism to define or defend, but each man will have a gospel of his own. Good morning, gentlemen."

CHAPTER IV.

The conversation was not resumed for several days. James found it a less easy task to define Protestantism than he had imagined. He had been accustomed to take the word in a very loose and indefinite sense. As chief of the Protestant League, he had meant by it little else than the denial of Catholicity; in his warfare against Socinians, rationalists, and transcendentalists, he had made it stand for doctrines and principles which logically imply the Catholic

Church; in his own pulpit, addressing the people of his charge, he had understood by it simply Presbyterianism, with a slight leaning, perhaps, towards Arminianism. But he had never given the term a clear, distinct, and uniform meaning, which he was willing to stand by in all places and on all occasions. He saw that to define it in a negative sense, and make Protestantism merely a protest against Rome, was not necessarily to distinguish it from paganism, Mahometanism, Judaism, deism, or even atheism; and to restrict it to simple Presbyterianism, if not against his conscience, was in the present state of the world, bad policy. It would be tantamount to saying that Protestantism is an empty name; that there are indeed Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, &c., but no Protestants; that there is a multitude of sects, indeed, sometimes arranged under one common name, but without any common faith or principles, except that of hostility to the church. It would, moreover, too openly expose his weakness to the enemy, and confess that the great and mighty Protestant party, which had begun by assuming such lofty airs, and threatening to become commensurate with Christendom, had dwindled down to the little handful of Presbyterians in Great Britain and the United States,—those on the Continent having pretty generally lapsed into Socinianism, rationalism, and transcendentalism,—divided into four or five separate, if not hostile, communions, and their numbers every day relatively diminishing, which would create mirth rather than dread at Rome, against whom he wished to carry on a war of extermination. On the other hand, to extend its meaning so as to embrace all the so-called Protestant sects, from Dr. Pusey down to Theodore Parker, from Oxford to the Melodeon, was hardly less inconvenient. He would never march through Coventry at the head of such a motley company. Rome would declare that all motleydom and all devildom had broken loose. He should never hear the last of it. But to find a definition which should extend beyond the narrow boundaries of Presbyteriandom without including all sectariandom was the difficulty. *Hoc opus, hic labor est.*

James spent several days in meditating on this problem, and without hitting upon a solution quite to his mind; but having obtained a few hints from some of the earlier Protestant controversialists, and trusting to the chapter of accidents, he took occasion, finding himself in his library alone with John, to renew the discussion.

"I think," said he, addressing his brother, "that, if you review our former conversation, you will own, my last answer to the question, What is Protestantism? is all that you have any right to demand."

"I have no wish to make any unreasonable demands," John replied. "What I want is to find out precisely what, in its distinctive features, this thing or this no-thing which you call Protestantism really is. If your answer tells me what it is, and distinguishes it, or enables me to distinguish it, from what it is not, it is unquestionably sufficient."

"Protestantism is the essentials, and the essentials are all the truths clearly and manifestly revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments."

"If to believe the essentials be all that is necessary to constitute one a Protestant, then all who believe all the truths clearly and manifestly revealed in the Scriptures must be Protestants."

"Certainly."

"If Catholics, as is very supposable, to say the least, believe all that is clearly and manifestly revealed in the Scriptures, then Catholics are Protestants."

"But Catholics do not believe all that is clearly and manifestly revealed in the Scriptures."

"They profess to do so, and they say with you, all that is clearly and manifestly revealed is essential to be believed, and no point of it can be disbelieved without essential error."

"But they hold that other things than those clearly and manifestly revealed in the Scriptures are also essential to be believed."

"That is, they believe all that you define to be the essentials are essentials, but do not believe that these are all the essentials. But this does not hinder them from being good orthodox Protestants; for your definition excludes only those who believe less, not those who believe more, than the essentials."

"Say, then, Protestantism is to believe all the essentials, and that what, and only what, is clearly and manifestly revealed in the Scriptures is essential, or, without essential error, can be believed to be essential. That excludes Catholics, by asserting the sufficiency of the Scriptures, which they do not admit."

"But besides the essentials, are the non-essentials, which may without essential error be either believed or disbelieved, to be the word of God?"

"That is what I contend."

"But they who believe them to be the word of God must believe them to be essential."

"Why so?"

"Remember Toby and his dog. He who believes a thing to be the word of God must either believe it essential to be believed, or else believe that it is no essential error to disbelieve God. Can I, without essential error, believe it is no essential error to disbelieve God?"

"No, for that is tantamount to making him a liar, since there is no essential difference between believing that it is no essential error to disbelieve God, and actually disbelieving him."

"Then they who believe the non-essentials to be the word of God must believe them to be essential, or else virtually make God a liar?"

"That follows."

"But it is essential error to believe any thing to be essential which is not essential?"

"So I have implied."

"Then it follows, does it not, that he who believes any of the non-essentials to be the word of God errs essentially?"

"So it would seem."

"All who differ from Presbyterians differ from them either by believing some things to be the word of God which Presbyterians deny to be his word, or *vice versa?*"

"True."

"If the latter, they err essentially, assuming Presbyterians to be right, by not believing all the essentials."

"Agreed."

"If the former, they err essentially by believing some things to be essential which are not."

"That also follows."

"Then all who differ from Presbyterians in matters of faith err essentially. Therefore, none who differ from them as to matters of faith can be essentially orthodox. If, then, you say none can be essentially orthodox who believe any of the non-essentials to be essential, you exclude all who differ from Presbyterians, make Presbyterianism and Protestantism equivalent and convertible terms, and declare none but Presbyterians are Protestants, which I understand you to deny."

"I do deny it; for Presbyterians are not the only essentially orthodox Protestants."

"How, then, can you say that Protestantism is to believe the essentials, and that only the essentials can, without essential error, be believed to be essential? Do you insist on saying this still?"

"I do."

"Is infant baptism an essential or a non-essential?"

"A non-essential, as I have told you more than once."

"But Presbyterians believe it to be a revealed command?"

"They do."

"Therefore believe it to be the word of God."

"Certainly."

"Then they believe it essential, and therefore err essentially by believing a non-essential to be essential. Hence, if you insist on saying that they who believe any thing but the essentials to be essential err essentially, you will exclude Presbyterians themselves from the number of essentially orthodox Protestants."

"But I have just told you Presbyterians hold infant baptism to be a non-essential."

"Then they hold it is no essential error to disbelieve God, which is itself a most essential error, for it virtually makes God a liar, as you have conceded. In either case, then, Presbyterians are excluded; in the one case, by believing a non-essential to be essential; and in the other, by believing it no essential error to make God a liar. Do you still insist that it is essential error to believe any thing in addition to the essentials to be essential?"

"I do."

"Then you abandon your distinction between the essentials and non-essentials?"

"Not at all."

"You still say, there are portions of the revealed word which may be either believed or disbelieved to be the word of God without essential error?"

"I do. To deny this would be to place myself in opposition to the whole Protestant world, from the time of the reformation down to the present moment. It is by means of this distinction that we have met and repelled the charge which Papists bring against us, that there is no unity of faith amongst us. In non-essentials we have always admitted we do not agree; but in essentials we have always contended we do agree; and, therefore, that there is among us substantial unity as to faith."

"These non-essentials, as to which Protestants have dif-

fered and still differ, have they been held to be non-essentials alike by those who believed and those who disbelieved them to be the word of God?"

"They have."

"All have agreed, then, that there is a portion of the word of God which it is no essential error to disbelieve?"

"Such is the fact."

"Are you not mistaken?"

"I think not."

"Then you hold that the whole Protestant world, from the time of the reformation down to the present moment, have believed it no essential error to disbelieve God, that it is no essential error to make God a liar; in a word, you hold that all Protestants always have been, and still are, virtual infidels. Will you still insist on the distinction between essentials and non-essentials?"

"I tell you I cannot surrender that distinction without placing myself in opposition to the whole Protestant world."

"You still say that there are portions of the word which are not essential?"

"I do."

"And these may be believed to be the word of God?"

"They may."

"And some who are essentially orthodox do so believe them, or at least some of them, to be the word of God?"

"They do."

"Yet no one is essentially orthodox who believes any thing but the essentials to be essential?"

"No one."

"And no one can believe any thing to be the word of God without believing it to be essential, as we have proved in the case of Toby and his dog?"

"Unless it be no essential error to disbelieve God."

"Some essentially orthodox Protestants believe, then, the same thing at the same time to be both essential and not essential?"

"That is not possible."

"Then it will be convenient to drop the distinction between essentials and non-essentials, and say that all who believe any thing to be the word of God, except what is clearly and manifestly revealed, err essentially, will it not?"

"No; for all that is revealed in the Scriptures evidently is not clearly and manifestly revealed, and it would be absurd to say that a man can err essentially in believing, when what he believes is the word of God."

"Then you will take the ground, that all essentially orthodox Protestants are, and always have been, virtual infidels, believing it no essential error to make God a liar?"

"Not that, by any means."

"You fall back, then, on your former ground, and say Protestantism is the essentials; he who believes these, whatever else he believes or disbelieves, to be the word of God, is essentially orthodox."

"Very well."

"But the non-essentials, or matters it is lawful to believe or disbelieve to be the word of God, are not the words of men or of devils, but revealed truths, as we agreed in our former conversation?"

"Certainly."

"But to believe the words of men or of devils to be the word of God is, as you have said, essential error."

"True."

"Then, after all, we cannot say that he who believes the essentials is essentially orthodox, whatever else he believes or disbelieves to be the word of God; for this would imply that it is no essential error to add to the word of God the words of men or of devils."

"Say, then, he who believes the essentials is essentially orthodox, whatever else he believes or disbelieves to be the word of God, provided he believes nothing to be the word of God which is not his word."

"Then none of those who believe any thing to be revealed which Presbyterians deny are essentially orthodox."

"I do not see that."

"What they believe which exceeds what you believe, you hold to be either revealed or not revealed. If revealed, *you* are guilty of the sin of infidelity in not believing it; if not revealed, you must hold they err essentially, for you hold they believe that to be the word of God which is not his word. The last is what you do hold, and therefore you cannot hold that they are essentially orthodox Protestants."

"Be it so."

"You must also deny those to be essentially orthodox who believe less than you do. If the matters you believe which they do not are not revealed truths, you err essentially in believing them to be revealed; if they are revealed, you must believe they err essentially in disbelieving them; since in disbelieving them you must hold they disbelieve God."

"That seems to be so."

"Then you exclude from the essentially orthodox all who believe more or less than yourselves; that is, all but yourselves. If, then, you insist on the proviso you have adopted in your definition, and say no one can be essentially orthodox who believes any thing in addition to the word, you must either give up your distinction, as I have said, between essentials and non-essentials, or else say it is no essential error to disbelieve God; which will you do?"

"Neither."

"But you either believe the non-essentials to be revealed truths, that is, the word of God, or you do not. If you do not, your distinction between them and the essentials avails you nothing, as we have seen. Hence you have insisted that they are revealed truths. But if you hold them to be revealed truths, you must hold them to be not non-essential, but essential, as Toby and his dog have proved to us, since to disbelieve them would be to make God a liar. This you admit, do you not?"

"I have admitted it over and over again."

"Then on no ground whatever can you admit any portion of revealed truth to be unessential, and, willingly or unwillingly, you must abandon your distinction between the essentials and non-essentials, and either say Protestants have been and are virtual infidels in teaching that it is no essential error to disbelieve God, or else that they have never meant that any portion of the revealed word, clearly and manifestly revealed or not, can be disbelieved without essential error. Which alternative do you elect?"

"If either, the latter."

"Presbyterians, then, are the only essentially orthodox Protestants."

"Very well."

"Presbyterians are fallible, liable to be mistaken?"

"We do not, like Romanists, set up a claim to infallibility."

"If they are fallible, it is possible they take that to be the word of God which is not his word, or deny that to be his word which is his word. In either case, they will be guilty of essential error. Consequently, it is possible that Presbyterians themselves are in essential error, and therefore impossible for them to say with certainty that they are essentially orthodox, and therefore they must admit that it is uncertain whether there are any essentially orthodox Protestants at all!"

"But you forget that the essentials are clearly and manifestly revealed, and therefore may be known with all necessary certainty."

"You also forget that we have just agreed that *all* revealed truth is essential, and that you have surrendered the distinction between essentials and non-essentials. You assumed, as you were obliged, the non-essentials to be revealed, for otherwise they would be simply the words of men or of devils, which it is not lawful to believe to be the word of God; but the moment you admit them into the category of revealed truths, you must either concede them to be essential, or else that it is no essential error to disbelieve God; that is, to be an infidel, and make God a liar. This last you could not do; therefore you were obliged to say all that is revealed is essential. But, if you say this, you must say, either that the essentials are not restricted to what is clearly and manifestly revealed, or else that nothing but what is clearly and manifestly revealed is revealed at all. Which will you say?"

"For the present, that nothing is revealed but what is clearly and manifestly revealed. Almighty God is good, and natural reason suffices to prove that he cannot have made that necessary to be believed which is obscure or doubtful. If he has made his whole word necessary to be believed, the whole must be clearly and manifestly revealed, and what is not so revealed can be no part of his word."

"His word, being clear and manifest, cannot be mistaken, or, at least, there can be no difficulty in determining what it is?"

"None."

"But clear and manifest are relative terms. A thing may be clear and manifest to you, and not to me. To whom, then, do you say the word is clearly and manifestly revealed?"

"What is clear and manifest *is* clear and manifest, and can be honestly mistaken by no one."

"That is, what is alike clear and manifest to all men."

"But I mean what is alike clear and manifest to all men."

"The word is revealed in the Scriptures, and in the Scriptures alone, and these alone are sufficient?"

"Yes; that is what all Protestants assert."

"The word is revealed in these alike clearly and manifestly to all men?"

"Yes."

"To those who cannot read, as to those who can?"

"There should be none who cannot read."

"But nineteen-twentieths of mankind, at the lowest calculation, cannot read, and nearly as large a proportion of those who can read cannot read so as to understand what they read. Do you say the revealed word is clearly and manifestly revealed to all these?"

"Of those to whom little is given little will be required."

"That is to say, Almighty God does not require faith in his word of the immense majority of the human race?"

"I say not that. Those who cannot read he instructs by his pastors and by his Holy Spirit."

"But if the instructions of pastors and the direct revelation of the Holy Spirit are necessary in the case of the larger part of mankind, how can you say the Scriptures are sufficient?"

"The Scriptures *are* sufficient."

"That is, for whom they suffice, and when and where they are not insufficient! That can hardly be questioned. But let us confine ourselves to those who can read, and who claim to be teachers among Protestants, so called. These all admit the Scriptures contain the whole revealed word?"

"They do."

"That they are the sole and sufficient rule of faith and practice?"

"Certainly."

"And that the word revealed in them is clear and manifest?"

"Unquestionably."

"And that only what is clear and manifest is revealed?"

"Be it so."

"Then they all agree as to what the word is?"

"No; I am sorry to say they do not."

"There is disagreement, then,—some saying the word is one thing, others saying it is not that, but something else?"

"But there is no *honest* disagreement; for the matter is clear and manifest, and none who do not wilfully close their eyes to the truth can mistake it."

"Are all parties dishonest?"

"No."

"Which is the honest, which the dishonest party?"

"The orthodox party is the honest party."

"Which party is that?"

"The one which believes what, and only what, is clearly and manifestly revealed."

"So say all parties; but which is that party?"

"The Scriptures must decide."

"But the dispute is as to what the Scriptures teach. They, by the very terms of the supposition, have already been appealed to, and each party has obtained a decision in its own favor. The question now is, Which is the true answer? What is the decision of the court?"

"Let the Scriptures be appealed to again."

"That avails nothing; for they decide always in precisely the same terms, and the dispute remains always the same."

"But the dispute is not honest."

"Be it so. But who is honest, who dishonest, you or your opponents? You charge them with dishonesty, and say the matter is clear and manifest as you believe; they retort and say it is clear and manifest as they believe. Which am I to believe?"

"Neither; but read the Scriptures and decide for yourself."

"And suppose I decide against both of you? There will then be three sects instead of two. Why shall I be counted the honest party rather than you or your opponents, they rather than you, you rather than they, either of you rather than I?"

"But the matter is clear and manifest to all who do not wilfully close their eyes to the light."

"With all my heart; but who are they who wilfully close their eyes to the light?"

"The Scriptures——"

"They have given their decision, and nothing is decided, for the dispute is as to what they decide."

"Evidently they cannot be good orthodox Protestants who teach doctrines repugnant to those of the Protestant reformation."

"Do you abandon the sufficiency of the Scriptures, then, and call in the aid of Protestant tradition?"

"I do not abandon the sufficiency of the Scriptures, but I maintain that what is clearly and manifestly repugnant to the doctrines of the reformers cannot be clearly and manifestly revealed in the Scriptures."

"Your rule of faith, then, is the Scriptures understood according to the reformers?"

"I hold the Scriptures alone are the rule of faith, but I compare my understanding of the Scriptures with the teachings of the reformers."

"And if it coincide with what they taught, you hold that you rightly understand the Scriptures, and believe what is clearly and manifestly revealed?"

"Very well."

"If the Scriptures alone are the rule, this appeal to the reformers is, if admissible, unnecessary; if it is necessary, and you cannot say that you rightly understand the Scriptures till you have brought your understanding of them to the test of the reformers, you cannot say the Scriptures alone are sufficient, or are alone your rule of faith. You then make the reformers, not the Scriptures, the test of the word."

"I do not make the reformers the test of the word. I love, honor, and revere the reformers as great and good men, raised up by God in his providence to deliver his people from the bondage of Rome, to arrest the tide of papal corruptions, roll back the darkness which was gathering over the world, restore the preaching of the word, and save the Christian religion from utter banishment from the face of the earth; but they were men, subject to the common frailties of our nature, and I follow them only so far as they follow Christ, who bids me call no man father upon earth, for one is my Master in heaven."

"In order to ascertain when and where the reformers follow Christ, you bring the reformers to the test of the Scriptures?"

"Precisely. I am to obey God rather than men."

"So you subject your understanding of the Scriptures to the test of the reformers, and the reformers to the test of your understanding of the Scriptures. If you agree with them, you are right; if they agree with you, they are right. Thus you prove your understanding by theirs, and theirs by yours!"

"I do no such thing. The Bible is the religion of Protestants, the Bible alone, and I am not obliged to consult the reformers in order to ascertain what is clearly and manifestly revealed."

"Then you have nothing to do with the reformers, and may at once dismiss them to their own place."

"That is, you would say the reformers, those great and godly men, are gone to hell?"

"If that is their own place, not otherwise."

"This is too bad. You know I love, honor, and revere the reformers, and it is no more than what you owe as a

gentleman, not to say a Christian, while conversing with me, to treat them and my own feelings with some little respect."

"Very well said, my most courteous and gentlemanly brother. Happy is he who practises as well as preaches. You know I love and revere the Holy Catholic Church, the immaculate spouse of the Lamb, and the joyful mother of all the faithful; and yet you have not hesitated to call her the 'Mystery of Iniquity,' 'Antichrist,' 'the Whore of Babylon,' 'a cage of unclean birds,' &c. Where was your regard for *my* feelings? And what right have you to complain, if there be meted to you the measure you mete? But you will not receive such measure from Catholics, for they have studied in the school of Christ, and learned, when reviled, not to revile again. I said nothing against the reformers, offered no opinion as to their final doom. It is not mine to judge them. But if they, Judas-like, betrayed their Master, rebelled against the church of God, and refused to obey the pastors the Holy Ghost had set over them, and died unrepentant, I need not tell you what is and must be their doom, or that of all who partake in their evil deeds, if they die unreconciled to God. It is no pleasant thought, but you called it up, not I."

"So Catholics send all Protestants to hell!"

"All good Catholics do all in their power to prevent their Protestant friends and neighbours from sending themselves there. But suppose we waive questions of this sort for the present. We shall be better able to discuss them after we have determined what Protestantism is, and when inquiring whether it is true or false, from heaven or from hell,—is a safe way of salvation, or only the way that leadeth to perdition. It is no idle question, my brother, we are discussing. It involves eternal consequences. If Protestantism be not of God, if it be not that one, true, holy religion which he revealed from the beginning, which he has commanded to be taught to all nations, and which he has promised to be with, to protect, and to bless all days unto the consummation of the world, I need not tell you what must inevitably be your doom, if living and dying where and as you are, or what you have but too much reason to fear is the doom of those you have nursed in your bosom, so tenderly loved, and for whom your tears are still flowing."

"Are you a priest? You talk like one."

"Perhaps nearly as much of one as yourself."

"Singular! I never thought of that before. Upon my

word, I believe you are a Romish priest, perhaps even a Jesuit."

"If either, you must believe me able to keep my own counsel. It is enough at present for you to see in me plain Jack Milwood, your elder brother, who, may be, knows a great deal more about you than you do about him."

"I wish, John, you would give me the history of your life since you left home. It must be full of interest, and I should really like to hear it."

"Rather than exert all your wit and skill in defining Protestantism? But when we have disposed of Protestantism, perhaps,—but at present we must return to the question."

"No, no, I insist on the life and adventures of John Milwood, eldest son of the late Jeremiah Milwood——"

"And brother of the distinguished James Milwood, the Reverend pastor of ——, and chief of the Protestant League for the conversion of the pope and the suppression of popery, and who, when questioned, could not tell what he meant by Protestantism. No, no, brother, let us finish our definition of Protestantism first."

"I have given you definitions enough and more than enough already, and you ought to be able to suit yourself with some one of them."

"But it is not what suits me, but what suits you. Which of these numerous definitions do you finally settle down upon?"

"Protestantism is what and only what is clearly and manifestly revealed."

"And what is that? Is it what you teach or what Mr. Silvertone teaches?"

"Mr. Silvertone is a Socinian."

"What then? Does he not believe all that is clearly and manifestly revealed?"

"No, he does not."

"He says he does; and why am I to believe you rather than him?"

"Read and decide for yourself."

"Then the word is what is clearly and manifestly revealed to *me*; but why what is clearly and manifestly revealed to me rather than to you, or to you rather than to Mr. Silvertone?"

"Mr. Silvertone, I tell you, is a Socinian, and denies what have always and everywhere been held to be the great fundamental doctrines of the Gospel."

"If you say that, you appeal to Catholic tradition. Is your rule of faith incomplete without Catholic tradition? But if you allege Catholic tradition against Mr. Silvertone, he alleges it against you; for the same tradition that condemns him condemns you. You cannot say he errs because he teaches what is repugnant to Catholic tradition, without condemning yourself and all Protestants."

"But the points on which he is condemned are fundamental points; those on which we are condemned, if we are condemned, are not fundamental."

"You forget Toby and his dog."

"No more of Toby and his dog."

"Honestly, brother, have so-called Protestants ever been able to agree as to what is clearly and manifestly revealed?"

"In truth, they have not."

"And are as far from agreeing as ever?"

"Apparently so."

"Then, in point of fact, they have never been able to agree among themselves as to what Protestantism really is?"

"Such, it must be owned, is the fact."

"The great reason, then, why you have found it so difficult to tell me what it is, is that what it is has never yet been determined?"

"Possibly."

"Since I would rather relieve than aggravate your embarrassment, allow me to suggest that you define Protestantism to be what all who assert the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and maintain them to be the sole and sufficient rule of faith and practice, agree to accept as clearly and manifestly revealed. This would make agreement the test of clear and manifest, and then you can say the word is that which is clearly and manifestly revealed, and which nobody disputes, which never has been disputed, and is not likely to be disputed."

"There is, undoubtedly, a tendency among those commonly regarded as orthodox Protestants to say this, and several distinguished actors in the recent movement against Rome have proposed that we should say this and make it the basis of our alliance. It has, I own, some plausibility, and one would naturally say what is disputed cannot, while what is not disputed must, be clear and manifest. But though I am far from being a bigot, and would encourage the largest liberty compatible with essentially religious faith, I cannot accept your suggestion. It is the Socinian ground,

and would place all sects who profess to be Christians on the same level. The Unitarian, who denies the Holy Trinity and Incarnation, would be as orthodox as he who believes them; and the Universalist, who denies future rewards and punishments, would be as sound in the faith as they who believe the righteous will enter into life eternal, but the wicked will go away into everlasting punishment. Nor is this all. I am unable to find any distinctively Christian doctrines which all, who would in such a case be rallied under the Protestant banner, really agree in accepting; for I am not aware of a single one which some professed Protestant has not controverted. So, were we to adopt the suggestion, there would be no revealed truth which would not be abandoned as non-essential, and nothing above mere natural religion to be held to be essential."

"So the various Protestant sects, taken altogether, have denied the whole Gospel, and left nothing but mere natural religion undisputed."

"Not even that, in fact, for German and American transcendentalists question essential portions of even natural religion."

"It is a hard case, brother, and I do not see that I can help you."

CHAPTER V.

Protestant controversialists are well hit off in Lessing's Fable of the *Poodle and Greyhound*. "'How our race is degenerated in this country!' said one day a far-travelled poodle to his friend the greyhound. 'In those distant regions which men call the Indies, there is still the genuine breed of hounds,—hounds, my brother, (you will not believe it, and yet I have seen it with my own eyes,) who do not fear to attack the lion and grapple with him.' 'Do they overcome him?' asked the prudent greyhound. 'Overcome him! Why as to that I cannot exactly say; but only think, a lion attacked!' 'But,' continued the greyhound, 'if these boasted hounds of yours do not overcome the lion when they attack him, they are no better than we, but a great deal more stupid.'" Only think, the church attacked! Attack her boldly, with or without success, and you are sure of the admiration of all—the poodles.

When the infamous Danton was asked by what means the pitiable minority he headed were able to maintain their

Reign of Terror and paralyze the millions opposed to him, he answered,—"By audacity, *audacity*, AUDACITY." Protestant leaders understand very well the advantages of audacity, and that, if one is only bold and unprincipled enough to throw out grave charges against the purest and noblest cause which ever existed, he will not fail of multitudes to credit him. Groundless objections, if not susceptible of an easy or a popular refutation, are as much to their purpose as any. They serve to attack the lion, to put Catholics on their defence, and that is the same as a victory. A child may start an objection which the ablest and most learned divine cannot answer—to the child. A very ordinary man may urge an objection to some article of faith which will demand, in him who is to receive the answer, as well as in him who is to give it, for its refutation, the most rare and extensive erudition, and familiarity with the deepest principles and nicest distinctions of scholastic theology and philosophy. No small part of the objections urged against the sacred mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Real Presence, and Transubstantiation, are objections which an ordinary mind may understand, but which it is impossible to answer to the general reader,—especially if the general reader be a Protestant. Such objections are exactly to the purpose of the Protestant controversialists, and gain them the applause of—the poodles.

These controversialists it is not to be presumed are ignorant that all the objections of past and present times to the church have been refuted, and unanswerably refuted; but, from the nature of the case, they have, in numerous instances, been refuted only to the professional reader. The nature of the objection, though itself popular, precluded a popular reply. In all such cases, Protestant controversialists have only to deny that any reply has been given, or to assert that the one given is inconclusive, and they come off triumphant. This is their common practice. Nothing is more common than to meet, in Protestant controversial works, objections, which have been refuted a hundred times, reiterated without a hint that any reply has ever been even attempted, and urged in a tone of confidence, as if Catholics themselves conceded them to be unanswerable. The impudence of Protestant polemics in this respect is notorious and undeniable.

That this method of conducting a controversy, on matters in which no one has any real interest in being deceived or in

deceiving, is fair, honorable, or just, it is not presumed any Protestant is silly enough to pretend; but, filled with an inveterate hatred of the church, and having decided that it is the church of Antichrist, Protestant leaders, apparently, regard themselves at liberty to make use of any means for its overthrow which promise to be successful, and have no scruple in resorting to artifices which would shock the moral sense of an ordinary heathen. The Catholic writer who should give a faithful account of their nefarious conduct in their war on the church, would find it harder to sustain himself with his friends than against his enemies; and he would hardly fail to be condemned by his own communion as a calumniator. Their conduct is so foreign to all the habits and conceptions of a simple-minded, honest Catholic, that one needs to have been a Protestant a great part of his life to be able to conceive it possible for beings having the human form, and pretending to some respect for religion and morals, to be guilty of so wide a departure from all that is true, just, and honorable. Hence the great tenderness and forbearance with which Catholics usually treat Protestants, and the undeserved credit they are accustomed to give them for a partial degree, at least, of fairness and candor.

At first view, one is at a loss to account for the sudden rise and rapid spread of the Protestant rebellion in the sixteenth century. Knowing by infallible faith, that the church is of God, the immaculate spouse of the Lamb, and that she has truth, wisdom, justice, sanctity, reason, evidence, on her side, the Catholic is astonished at so singular a phenomenon; but as he penetrates deeper into that mystery of iniquity, and becomes familiar with the character of the rebel chiefs, and the means they adopted, his astonishment ceases, and his wonder is, not that the success was so great, but that it was not greater,—that the revolt was so soon arrested and confined within limits that it has not as yet been able to overleap. He sees nothing marvellous in the success of these rebel chiefs, but he is struck with the manifest interposition of divine Providence to confound their language, to divide their counsels, to defeat their plans, to arrest their progress, to protect his church, to show his unfailing love for her, and to augment her power and glory. Protestantism, as relates to Europe, is actually confined within narrower limits than it was fifty years after the death of Luther, while the church has gone on enlarging her borders, and never at any former period was the number of the faithful so great as it is now.

They who attack existing institutions, especially if those institutions are wise and salutary, may always count on the admiration and applause of all the poodles. Fixed and authoritative institutions are offensive to the natural man. They are a restraint, and no man, save so far as assisted and subdued by grace, loves restraint; and there is no one that has not a natural repugnance to whatever curbs his lawless desires and licentious passions, or interposes an obstacle to his living as he lists. In every community,—because in every natural man,—there is always a predisposition, more or less manifest, to rebel against the existing order, and to welcome and adhere to those who are prepared to war against it, especially to credit whatever may be advanced to its prejudice. They who attack the existing order, appealing to this predisposition, have the appearance of attacking tyranny and oppression, and of being champions of freedom and justice. This fact renders them respectable, almost sacred, in the eyes of the multitude. Their position, moreover, permits them to assume a bold and daring tone, to make broad and sweeping assertions, and to forego clear and exact statements, and close and rigid logic. They can declaim, denounce, be impassioned, and affect all the eloquence of virtuous indignation. The eloquence of denunciation is the easiest thing in the world to command; for it appeals directly to those elements of our nature which lie nearest the surface and which are the most easily moved, and weak men prefer it and excel in it.

But he who defends authority labors always under a disadvantage. He has an unpopular cause. To the superficial, —and they are always the great majority,—he is the advocate of tyranny, the enemy of liberty, warring against the best interests and true dignity and glory of his race. He can appeal to no popular passion, use no burning words, and pour forth no strains of indignant eloquence. He cannot speak to the multitude. He must speak to sober sense, to prudent judgment, and aim to convince the reason, instead of moving the sensibility, or inflaming the passions. His words, to all but the few, are cold and spiritless, tame and commonplace. For the foaming tankard or sparkling goblet, with which the popular declaimer regales his auditors, he has only simple water from the spring. He must be subdued in his tone, measured in his speech, exact in his statements, rigid in his reasoning, and few only will listen to him, and fewer still can appreciate him. He who for

years has been on the side opposed to authority, and by his bold and daring declamation roused up a whole ocean of popular passion, and at every word brought an echo from the universal heart of humanity, no sooner finds himself on the other side, than all his marvellous eloquence is lost, and he is pronounced, by the very public which had hailed him as a second Cicero or Demosthenes, cold and weak, a Samson shorn of his locks and grinding in the mill of the Philistines. No matter how true and just his thought, how deep and searching his wit, how wise and prudent his counsel, how lucid and exact his statements, how clear and cogent his reasoning, he can excite no passion, move no sensibility, and bring no popular echo. The spell is broken; his magic is over, and his power to charm is gone for ever. He is no Indian hound, fearing not to attack the lion, and the poodles see nothing in him to admire.

Then, again, the poodles regard the lion attacked as the lion vanquished. They hold every objection boldly and confidently made to be true, till it is proved to be false. In this fact, in the tendency of the great majority to regard every objection made to existing authority as well founded till the contrary is shown, lies the secret of the Protestant reformation. To this the reformers owed their brilliant success. They well understood that their objections to the church would be credited by multitudes, till refuted. It was a matter of little importance, so far as their success was concerned, whether their objections were true or false. What they wanted was simply objections easily made, but not easily refuted,—susceptible of being proposed in a popular form, but not susceptible of a popular answer. Such objections they employed their wit in inventing, and their skill and activity in circulating. A lie, happily conceived, adroitly told, and well stuck to, was in their case hardly, if at all, inferior to the truth; and it must be conceded that they had a marvellous facility in inventing lies, and in adhering to them when they had once told them. Whoever coolly examines their objections to the church will readily perceive that they are all framed with respect, not to truth, but to the difficulty of refutation, and on the principle that a lie is as good as the truth till it is contradicted. Gloriously did they chuckle, we may fancy, when the "Father of lies" helped them to a popular objection, to which no popular answer could be returned. Boldly, or with brazen impudence, they threw it out, sent it forth on its errand of

mischief, and then laughed at the heavy answer which, in process of time, came lumbering after it. The objection was made in a few words, on a loose sheet, and wafted by the wind of controversy through every land, town, village, and hamlet, to every door, and became universally known; the answer followed in a ponderous quarto or folio, all bristling with scholastic formulas and scholastic distinctions, formidable even to the professional reader. Its circulation was necessarily limited; few only heard of it; fewer read it, and still fewer were able to appreciate it. The authors of the objection safely ignored it, or, if they could not, they misrepresented it, denied its conclusiveness, and even made it the occasion of a new triumph with their followers. Or, when they could neither conceal the fact of the answer nor its conclusiveness, they could still count on all the poodles, who would insist that there must have been something in the objection, or else it would not have required so elaborate and so learned a refutation. The lion had been attacked,—and that was something.

"Where there is much smoke, there is some fire," says the popular proverb. Surely there must be something wrong in the church, or so much would not, and could not, be said against her. Whether, therefore, the objections actually urged be precisely true or not, it is evident the church is not unobjectionable, and if not unobjectionable, we are justified in rejecting her. So reason the poodles,—forgetting that our blessed Lord himself was everywhere spoken against, was called a glutton and a drunkard, the friend of publicans and sinners, a blasphemer, a seditious fellow, a fool, said to be possessed of the devil, and finally crucified between two thieves as a malefactor. Here was smoke enough,—was there also some fire? Here were objections enough raised, charges enough preferred,—was there also some truth in them? Where is the blasphemous wretch that dare think it? If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household! If so they have accused the Lord himself, how much more his church? To one competent to reason on the subject, the grave character and multiplicity of the objections alleged against the church are an evidence that she is God's church. "Will you tell me what books I may read to become acquainted with the Catholic faith?" said, the other day, an intelligent Protestant to the writer. "I am wholly ignorant of the Catholic Church, but I hear, every-

where, so much said against it, that I cannot help thinking there must be something good in it, and that possibly it is the true church." This lady, brought up a rigid Calvinist, through God's grace, had learned to reason far more justly than she had been taught by her Protestant masters, and, if true to the grace she has received, will ere long be admitted into the "Communion of Saints." But she is not one of the poodles; and the reformers preferred, and their successors prefer, the admiration of these to the approbation of the sober and prudent greyhounds.

The policy of the reformers was indicated by Luther, when he took the discussion of theological questions out of the schools and from the tribunal of professional theologians, and brought it before the unprofessional public. I picked up, the other day, in a steamboat, a flaming quack advertisement. It appeared that the advertiser had, as he alleged, discovered an entirely new medical system, which placed all the regular medicineers, from Æsculapius down, quite in the wrong. He had challenged the regular practitioners to a discussion of the merits of their respective systems. The challenge had been accepted, but on condition that the discussion should be before a jury of medical men. The advertiser scorned this condition. It proved that the "regular doctors" had no confidence in their own system; for if otherwise, they would not shrink from a public discussion. It was an insult to the public, and he would not submit to it. He was ready and anxious to discuss the question; but he would do it before no prejudiced jury of professional men; he would do it openly before his free and enlightened fellow-citizens, who were the only proper tribunal. He trusted his fellow-citizens, the free and enlightened public, would appreciate his motives in refusing to be a partner in offering so gross an indignity to their intelligence and impartial judgment, and would be at no loss to understand why the regular practitioners had annexed to their acceptance of his challenge so insulting a condition.

Now here am I, said I to myself, throwing down the advertisement, at least a fair average of the popular intelligence. I have even studied, with considerable attention, several branches of medical science; and yet how utterly unqualified I should be to sit as judge on the respective merits of rival systems! I might listen to the statements of either party, but I am too ignorant of the general subject

to be able to perceive the bearing and real value of the statements of one or the other. I might, indeed, if such should happen to be the case, perceive that this pretended discoverer silenced his opponent; but I could draw no inference from that, for nothing is more common than for a man to triumph through impudence, or because too ignorant to be refuted. The proper judges of a controversy like the one here proposed are medical men themselves, as lawyers are the proper judges of law questions. Indeed, the very fact, that this advertiser refuses to argue his case before an audience of professional men, and appeals to the unprofessional public, is to me full proof that he is a quack, and sufficient to decide me, without further examination, against him. If I need medical advice, I am sure I shall not call him in, any more than I would a miserable pettifogger in an important and intricate law case. I can confide my health and that of my family to no practitioner whose science and skill are not superior to my own, and vouched for by those who know more of medical matters than I do, and are far better judges of medical systems than I am.

Just so would I have reasoned, if I had been present, when Luther made his appeal to the unprofessional public. Why did he make such appeal? Because the public at large are the proper tribunal for professional questions? Because they can really judge better, discriminate more accurately, and decide with more wisdom and justice, than they who by their profession are at least somewhat acquainted with the matters in controversy? Because he really believed them the best qualified to be judges? No one can be so simple as to believe it, so senseless as to pretend it. Luther knew that loose statements, confident assertions, bold allegations, and impassioned appeals would avail him nothing before a jury of theological doctors. He knew that there he could not lie with impunity, and that his "bellowing in bad Latin" would win him no laurels. He may have persuaded himself, or suffered the devil to persuade him,—and if we may believe his own statements, his colloquies with the devil were frequent, and intimate—that the church was wrong; but he must have known that the particular objections he brought against her were groundless, and that it was only by disregarding the established rules of reasoning, and resorting to falsehood and sophistry, confident assertions and bold and daring denunciations, that he could

sustain himself or his party. And these could avail only with the unprofessional public, who could never understand the exact points in question, perceive the bearing, or feel the force, of strict logical arguments. With them eloquence would pass for reason, and invective for argument. This he knew, and hence his appeal from the schools to the public at large. Hence have his followers continued to appeal to the multitude, and to leave truth and justice to take care of themselves.

This policy, however, is not without certain drawbacks. It answers admirably while the party adopting it have nothing of their own, and are mere Bedouins of the desert, free to attack when and where they please. But when and where they have acquired a partial success, and wish to abandon their wandering life and predatory warfare, and settle down in fixed dwellings, with something established and permanent of their own, they find it unavailing. Men, as Carlyle remarks, cannot live without clothes, and surely in this bleak, wintry world it is not convenient to go naked. They must and will have something to cover their nakedness,—some sort of institutions for their protection. They will cover themselves with aprons of fig-leaves, and build them a hut with broken branches, seek out a cavern in the rocks, or a hole in the earth, if they can do no better. They must and will have something they call religion, some established mode of communion, real or not real, with the Invisible. Even the atheist fabricates to himself a god of nature, and renders it a species of worship, and the sceptic seeks to convert his scepticism into a creed. It is horrible to feel one's self alone in the world, abandoned to the blind workings of the elements, with no Father in heaven, no brothers on earth, standing on a mere point, surrounded by a universal blank. We cannot endure it. Nature recoils from herself, and the soul shrieks out, "O thou Great Unknown, save me from myself! leave me, O, leave me not to the solitude of my own being!" There is a God, and a God to be worshipped, is written in golden letters on all nature, and engraven as with the point of a diamond on every heart. In vain would man tear himself away from his Maker. Go where he will, be and do what he will, sleeping or waking, the God that made him and seeks his heart woos him with his love, or pursues him with his justice. The boldest recoil from his justice, and quake before the undefined dread of his vengeance, and seek some medium of

yielding the love, or of providing a substitute for the love he solicits.

Protestants went on gloriously, while they aimed at nothing but to attack the existing ecclesiastical order. The means they had chosen were just fitted to their purpose. But when a large number had been seduced from their allegiance, and found themselves homeless, and shelterless, and naked in this bleak world, a new class of wants sprung up to be provided for. Some substitute for what had been thrown away in their madness was to be sought out. Their old arts and methods were useless now. As soon as they had something with which they were unwilling to part, something, in a word, to defend, the weapons which they had forged were no longer adapted to their purpose, and could be turned against them with murderous effect. Thus short-sighted and self-destructive is iniquity ever.

Poor James experienced the truth of this, the moment he was called upon to answer why he was a Protestant. The question was a novel one, and he soon found that he was wholly unprovided with a satisfactory answer. He had sought long and earnestly for specious objections to the church, but he had entirely neglected to furnish himself with arguments for Protestantism as distinguishable from Socinianism or infidelity. Nay, he was unable even to tell, save in a negative sense, what he meant by Protestantism. Adopt what definition he would, it would include either too much or too little. It was too bad. Yet his natural pride would not permit him to yield to the obvious truth, that he must either be a Catholic or reject all revealed, if not all natural, religion. With the multitude he might, indeed, sustain himself. There his audacity and his eloquence would serve him, but they were lost upon his cool and logical brother. John was no poodle, that was certain, and could never be made to regard the lion attacked as the lion overcome, or even to admire the rashness of an attack where there could be no victory. What was to be done? Give up the point? That would never do, and he the virtual chief of the Protestant league for the conversion of the pope and the suppression of popery! What then? Surely he was the equal of his brother in acquirements, and he had always, in their school days, been regarded as his superior in natural gifts. He would not believe that he had the weaker cause. His failure, thus far, must be owing to his yielding the management of the argument to his brother,

and his not having been sufficiently on his guard against his sophistry and Jesuitical cunning. Could he not correct this? Could he not contrive to change the issue, and throw the burden of proof on the Catholic? He pondered the matter for several weeks, and finally concluded, that, if he could not define and establish Protestantism, he might at least disprove Catholicity, and thus justify the reformers in separating themselves from the church.

CHAPTER VI.

As soon as James had come to this sage conclusion, an opportunity was found of renewing the discussion. This time it was John who opened it.

"Well, brother, he said, have you succeeded in finding a definition of Protestantism to your mind?"

"I wish to consider Protestantism, now, only as a protest against the errors and corruptions of popery. Here you affirm and I deny, and consequently the laboring oar is in your hands."

"Not exactly, my prudent brother. You affirm Catholicity is corrupt. You are, then, the accuser, the plaintiff in action, and must set forth your charges and sustain them. The principle of law is, every man is to be presumed innocent till proved guilty. The church must, therefore, be presumed innocent till the contrary is made to appear."

"The church claims to be an ambassador from God, and to have the right to command me in his name. She must bring credentials from God, before I can be held to hear or obey her. I demand her credentials."

"All in good time. But not too many things at once. You shift the question before you get it fairly stated. You begin by charging the church with being corrupt, and, without offering any proofs of her corruption, you proceed immediately to demand her credentials as the ambassador of God. This will not do. Corruption implies integrity; and the plea that the church is corrupt concedes her credentials, and merely charges her with exceeding her authority, or with having abused it. This plea concedes her authority; but the demand for credentials denies it. You cannot, therefore, plead, at one and the same time, want of authority, and corruption or abuse of authority. You must elect one or the other, and confine yourself to the one you elect."

"I am no lawyer, and do not understand special pleading."

"But you are an educated man, and are to be presumed to understand, at least, the ordinary rules of logic, and therefore that the same thing cannot be both conceded and denied in the same breath. You cannot say that the church is corrupt, has abused or misused her authority, and yet deny her authority. When you deny that she has ever received authority from God, you declare her, *in quantum Ecclesia*, a nullity from the beginning, and to allege the corruption of a nullity is absurd."

"Be it so. The Romish Church never received authority from God, or, in other words, was never divinely commissioned."

"Possession is in law *prima facie* evidence of title. The church is in possession, and has been so from time immemorial. The presumption is, therefore, in her favor, and you must admit her title, or set forth good and valid reasons for contesting it."

"Prescription does not apply in the case of the church."

"It is admitted in law, and therefore, by the reason of mankind, as a general principle. If you deny its application in the case of the church, you allege an exception to the general rule, and must show a reason for it."

"Prescription does not give an absolute title, but simply a presumptive title against adverse claimants. It presupposes the existence of the estate to be conceded, the title of which is vested in some one, and presumes it to be in the possessor, unless the contrary is shown. But where the existence of the estate is the matter in question, it is idle to plead possession or prescription. What is not cannot be possessed. The estate, in the present case, is the divine commission. Supposing it conceded that such a commission has at some time been issued, possession may, I grant, be pleaded as *prima facie* evidence of title in the possessor. But I deny that such a commission as the Romish Church claims to have received has ever been issued. You must prove, therefore, the fact of such commission, before you can plead possession or prescription."

"Possession implies the object possessed. Evidence of the possession is, therefore, evidence of the existence of that which is possessed. Consequently, just in proportion as there is evidence that the church has possessed, or claimed and exercised, with the general consent, the commission in

question, and as her having claimed and exercised it with this consent is presumptive proof of title against adverse claimants, is there presumptive proof that the commission has been issued."

"*Quod nimis probat, nihil probat.* Your argument, if it prove any thing, proves too much. A pagan or a Mahometan may say as much."

"If either paganism or Mahometanism claims a similar commission, and can, as the church, be said to be in possession, the fact is, in like manner, presumptive evidence of title till the contrary appears, I both concede and contend. Nothing can generate nothing. The claim to a divine commission must have had some origin, and, on the principle of law, that every man must be presumed innocent till proved to be guilty, must be presumed to have had a good origin till the contrary is proved. False religions imply the existence of the true religion, as counterfeit coin implies the genuine. The claim to divine commission, if it be really made by either paganism or Mahometanism, is therefore *prima facie* evidence that at some time, to somebody, a divine commission has issued. If no such commission had ever been given, it is not conceivable that it could have been claimed. No one would ever have falsely claimed to be an ambassador from one court to another, if no genuine ambassador, or nothing in the same order, had ever been known or heard of; and the sending of ambassadors must have become a general custom, before any one, not duly commissioned, could have conceived the project of palming himself off as one, or could have hoped for any success in the attempt to do it. The fact of possession, where it could be pleaded, would be a presumption of title in the Mahometan or the pagan, in like manner as it is in the case of the Catholic. Hence the church, where she has never been in possession, when presenting herself as an *adverse claimant*, always produces her credentials, and gives good and valid reasons why the present occupant should be ousted and she placed in possession. I admit, therefore, all that the argument implies, and deny that it proves too much."

"But admit it, and every mad enthusiast who claims to be divinely commissioned must be presumed to be so till the contrary is shown."

"Not at all. His claim to a divine commission is, if you will, a presumption that at some time, to somebody, a divine commission has issued; but not that it has issued to

him; for he is not and never has been in possession. He must show a reason for *his* claim, before it can be admitted."

"At least, the principle applies to Protestants as well as to pagans and Mahometans, and you can no more plead prescription against us than against them."

"I have admitted the plea of prescription, in the case of paganism and Mahometanism, on the supposition that they are really in possession,—a fact, however, which I let pass, but do not concede. But Protestants cannot plead prescription, because they are not and never have been in possession, and because they do not even claim to be, since you, in their name, deny that the commission in question has ever issued."

"But conceding that there was a presumption in favor of the church at the epoch of the reformation, and that the reformers were not at liberty to separate from her without cause, this cannot be said now. The church is not now in possession. The reformers gave good and valid reasons for separating from her communion, and she has been condemned as a usurper by the judgment of mankind. The question is not now on ousting her from a possession which she has held from time immemorial, but on reversing the judgment rendered against her, and readmitting her to a possession from which she has been ejected by due process of law."

"When was the judgment you speak of rendered? and where is the record of the court?"

"The fact is one of public notoriety, and all the world now laughs at the ridiculous pretensions of Rome."

"Do you include in *all the world* the pagan and Mahometan worlds?"

"Why should I not?"

"It may be doubted whether the question has really ever come before them in such a shape that they can be said to have pronounced judgment upon it; and as they reject Protestantism, whenever it pretends to be Christian, no less than Catholicity, they might possibly be as unsafe witnesses for a Presbyterian as for a Catholic,—perhaps even more so."

"Let them go. I mean by *all the world* all the Christian world, Christendom so called."

"You mean to assert, then, that Christendom has pronounced judgment against the Catholic Church?"

"Yes, against the *Romish* Church."

"You distinguish without a difference. The church in communion with the church of Rome, acknowledging its pontiff for its supreme head on earth, is the only church which, by the consent of mankind, is or ever has been denominated the *Catholic* Church."

"She should be denominated the mother of harlots."

"So that Protestant communions might claim to be her daughters. But no more of this. Have Catholics, who remain in her communion, pronounced judgment against the church?"

"Perhaps not."

"And they are as two, if not three, to one of all who bear the Christian name."

"I am sorry to say they are."

"And I am not sorry, and would to God there were none but Catholics on the earth!"

"That is, you would, if you could, exterminate all Protestants."

"Yes, if making them sincere and humble Catholics were exterminating them. But if Catholics are the great majority of Christendom, how can you tell me that Christendom has pronounced judgment against the church?"

"I do not reckon Papists among Christians."

"And I regard what you call Papists as the only true Christians; and I have, to say the least, as much right to my reckoning as you have to yours. You mean, then, by Christendom those who protest against the church?"

"You may have it so."

"Then your position is, the church is condemned by all by whom she is condemned! This may be granted. But these are a small minority, a mere handful, of those who bear the Christian name. By what right do you pronounce their judgment the judgment of mankind?"

"Protestant nations are the more enlightened and advanced portion of mankind."

"Is that a conceded fact?"

"Is it not?"

"Do Catholics concede it?"

"Perhaps not."

"They are the great majority, and, as they deny it, how can you put it forth as generally conceded?"

"The denial of Catholics amounts to nothing,—the fact is as I allege."

"In whose judgment?"

"In the judgment of all who are competent to judge in the premises."

"Who says so?"

"I say so."

"On what authority?"

"The fact is evident, and cannot be questioned."

"But it is questioned and denied by Catholics, who are as five to one to your Protestants."

"They will swear to any thing their priests tell them. Their denial is not to be counted. They are not to be permitted to testify in their own cause."

"As much as you in yours. Their denial is as good as your assertion, till you show some reason why your assertion is to be preferred."

"I tell you Protestant nations are the most enlightened and advanced portion of mankind, as is well known."

"Well known to whom? To themselves?"

"Yes, if you will."

"By what right are they both witnesses and judges in their own cause?"

"By the right of being the most enlightened and advanced portion of mankind."

"What is it to be truly enlightened and advanced?"

"Those nations are the most enlightened and advanced that are the most enlightened and advanced in what is of the greatest importance and utility to man."

"And what is that?"

"Religion, the 'one thing needful.'"

"True religion, or false?"

"True religion, of course."

"The most enlightened and advanced nations are, then, those who are the most enlightened and advanced in the requirements of true religion?"

"They are; and therefore I claim Protestant nations as the most enlightened and advanced."

"And therefore beg the question. If Protestantism be the true religion, you are right; if Catholicity be the true religion, you are wrong. Consequently, you must determine which is the true religion, before you can determine which are the more enlightened and advanced nations."

"But it cannot be denied that Protestant nations are more intelligent, more industrious, and better instructed in the science and art of government."

"What you say may be questioned; but even conceding

it, it amounts to nothing. Because a man is a good cobbler it does not follow that he is a good sculptor. Because a nation is enlightened in mere earthly matters, it does not follow that it is in religious matters. It would be a solecism to say the Athenians were a more enlightened and advanced nation than the Jews, or that a Socrates is better authority on religion than David, Solomon, or Isaias."

"But I have always considered it undeniable that Protestant nations are in advance of all the others."

"If to advance consists in shaking off Christian civilization and in returning to that which is superseded, you may have been right; otherwise, the probability is, that you have been altogether wrong. You must prove Protestantism to be true religion, before you can claim Protestant nations as the more enlightened and advanced nations; and till you can so claim them, you cannot claim their judgment as the judgment of mankind, even if you could then; and till you can claim their judgment as the judgment of mankind, you cannot say the judgment of mankind has condemned the church. This you have not yet done. Consequently, you cannot say the church has been ejected from her possession by the judgment of mankind. She is, as it appears, from the fact that the overwhelming majority of those who bear the Christian name continue, as they have always continued, to adhere to her, still in possession. She has lost nothing, and you have gained nothing, by the lapse of three hundred years. The question stands to-day as it did in 1517, and she may plead the *olim possideo*, as she could then, and with even additional force; and you must set forth in your declaration good and valid reasons for ejecting her, before you can compel her to plead any other title than that of prescription."

"But you forget that the reformers did set forth such reasons."

"I cannot have forgotten what I never knew. But whatever reasons they set forth, the presumption is that they were insufficient; for they have been so regarded by Christendom generally, since the church continues in possession, and the great majority of all who are called Christians still adhere to her communion."

"But they were in reality sufficient, and ought to have been so regarded."

"That is a point to be proved. What were those reasons?"

"The first in order, if not in time, was, that our Lord founded no authoritative church such as the Romish claims to be."

"We have seen she was in possession, and the presumption was in her favor. What you state was an allegation which needed to be proved."

"The reformers proved it."

"By what evidence?"

"By the word of God."

"Had they the word of God?

"They had."

"Did the church concede that they had it?"

"They had the Holy Scriptures, and she admitted that they were the word of God."

"That the mere letter was the word of God, or the sense in which the Holy Ghost dictated them?"

"The sense, of course; for words are nothing without their sense."

"Did she admit that the reformers, in having the letter of Scripture, had its sense, which is the word of God?"

"She did not."

"Was, according to her, the Holy Scripture the word of God, if understood in any sense different from hers?"

"No; she claimed the right to declare its sense."

"Did the reformers adduce the words of Scripture, in support of their allegation that our Lord had founded no such church as she pretended to be, in the sense she gave them?"

"They did not; for she explained them in her own favor."

"Then she did not admit that what they adduced in support of their allegation was the word of God. Then, as the burden of proof was on them, they were bound to prove that it was his word."

"They quoted the Scriptures, and they were the word of God."

"In the sense of the church, not otherwise. The reformers pleaded the word of God in support of their allegation. The church replied by denying that what they set forth as the word of God was his word. Her reply was sufficient, unless they proved that it was his word."

"But their plea was evident on its face, for they alleged the very words of Scripture."

"That they alleged the very words of Scripture may be

denied, for in point of fact there are no words of Scripture which say that our Lord did *not* found such a church as the Catholic Church claimed and claims to be; but let that pass for the present. They pleaded the word of God, and the word of God is not the words, but the sense, of Scripture. To adduce the words, therefore, availed them nothing, unless they proved that the sense of the words, as intended by the Holy Ghost, was what they pretended; for till then they could not assert that they had adduced the word of God."

"But the matter was so plain, that there could be no question as to the genuine sense of the words adduced."

"But there was a question as to the sense, by your own admission. The church attached to them one sense, and the reformers another."

"But the words themselves necessarily mean what the reformers asserted."

"We cannot go into that question at present. The right to declare the word of God is included in the possession of the church, and the fact that she denied the reformers' sense is *prima facie* evidence in her favor and against them."

"I do not admit that."

"You have admitted it; for you have conceded that prescription was in favor of the church, and is *prima facie* evidence of title. You must, therefore, admit the word of God as the church declares it, till you can assign a good and valid reason for not doing so."

"The fact that the express words of Scripture are against her is such a reason."

"The express words of Scripture you cannot allege; because, as a matter of fact, no such words are to be found; and because, if there were such words, they still could not be adduced against the church, for the Scriptures are in her possession, and denied to have authority save as she understands them."

"That would be to deny that the Scriptures are legitimate evidence in support of an allegation against the church."

"That is not my fault. The reformers could not, of course, legitimately quote the Scriptures as the word of God against the church, save in the sense she authorized, unless they succeeded in removing the presumption she derived from prescription, and in getting themselves legal possession of them."

"I do not admit that. The Scriptures were the law, to which the church and all were accountable."

"As declared by the church, *transeat;* but that they were the law in any other sense the reformers were bound to prove."

"But the reformers had the word of God as well as the church, and therefore were not bound, even presumptively, by the sense she declared."

"Had they *legal* possession of the word of God?"

"I care nothing about that. They had the Scriptures, and that was enough; for they had in them the rule of faith, both for them and for the church."

"But you must care for that; for it is conceded that the church was in possession, and, being in possession, she had the presumptive right to declare the law; and they were bound to take it from her, unless they could prove that they had legal possession of the word."

"They received the Scriptures from God himself."

"They were, then, the legal depositaries of the word?"

"Yes, as much as the church."

"Had they the right to declare its sense?"

"Why not?"

"If you say that, you concede the point you dispute. You allege against the church, that our Lord founded no such church. The essential character of the church, so far as concerns the present controversy, is, that she has the word of God, and is its legal keeper and expounder. If, then, you say the reformers had legal possession of the word, and were authorized to keep and expound it, you make them essentially such a church as you assert our Lord did not found. You contest the claims of the church on the ground that our Lord founded no church with the authority she exercises; you must, then, unless you would concede what you deny, disclaim that authority on the part of the reformers."

"I do disclaim it on their part."

"Then you grant, in the outset, that they had no legal possession of the word, and were not its authorized keeper and expounder; therefore, that they had no word of God which they had authority to quote against the church. What they had not they could not adduce. Consequently, they did not, for they could not, adduce the word of God in support of their allegation."

"But they had the Scriptures, as a matter of fact, and could read and understand them for themselves."

"They had the Scriptures as a private citizen has the statute-book, it may be; but as they were not the authorized keeper and expounder of the word of God, their understanding of it was without authority, and not to be entertained."

"They had the right from God himself to read and understand the word for themselves."

"Then they were authorized to keep and expound it, at least for themselves."

"They were."

"But I understand you to deny that any body was authorized to keep and expound the word."

"I do not say so. Almighty God, in revealing his word, has authorized every one to keep, read, and expound its sense."

"Then, so far from its being true, as you have alleged, that our Lord has founded no church with the authority the Catholic Church claims, he has constituted each individual a church with the same authority. Decidedly, brother, you must give up this, or withdraw your allegation. If you admit that our Lord has anywhere authorized any body, individual or collective, to keep and expound the word of God, you admit that he did found, essentially, such a church as your allegation denies. You cannot deny such authority to the church on the ground that no such authority was ever given, and then claim it for each and every individual."

"Be that as it may, I do claim it for each and every individual."

"That is a bold stand for a Presbyterian, but necessity sometimes compels us to be bold. But did the church admit this?"

"No, she denied it."

"Then the reformers were bound to prove it."

"They did prove it."

"By what authority?"

"The word of God."

"By what the church admitted to be the word of God?"

"No matter what she admitted. They proved it by the word itself."

"Who says so?"

"They said so."

"On what authority?"

"On the authority of God's word."

"On what authority did they say that that was the word of God which authorized them to say so?"

"The word itself."

"But by what authority did they prove the word itself?"

"The word of God *is* the word of God, and is in all cases supreme. Would you deny the word of God?"

"But as the church denied what they adduced as the word of God to be his word, they were then bound to prove that it was his word."

"What did Almighty God give us his word for, if it was not that we should read and understand it for ourselves?"

"Your first business is to prove that he has given *you* his word. The church asserts that he has given it to *her*, and that she permits the faithful to read the Scriptures for their edification, but always with submission to her authority, and the reservation that no doctrine is to be deduced from them which she does not authorize."

"There she is wrong."

"That is for you to prove."

"God proposed to teach mankind by writings, not by a body of men."

"That, also, is for you to prove."

"It is evident from the word itself."

"You must prove that *you* have the word, before you can introduce it as evidence."

"No one can read the New Testament and believe otherwise."

"Not true in fact; for the great mass of all who do read the New Testament actually believe otherwise. But you must get legal possession of the New Testament, and establish your right to interpret it, before you can quote it in a sense the church denies. Till then, the denial of your assertion by the church is *prima facie* evidence against you."

"I do not care for the church. I deny her authority."

"I know that; but her authority is to be presumed, till reasons are set forth for denying it. You are not at liberty to deny it without a reason."

"I have given a reason."

"What is it?"

"Why, I tell you she is condemned by the word of God."

"You *tell* me so, but that is not enough. You must *prove* that it is so."

"You do not suffer me to do so. You will not suffer me to quote the Bible against her."

"No such thing. *When you have proved that the Bible, in the sense you adduce it, is the word of God*, you may quote it to your heart's content."

"Why, I have told you again and again that the church herself admits the Bible to be the word of God, and therefore it is not necessary, in arguing against her, to prove that what I adduce from it is the word of God."

"The Bible in the sense she authorizes, she admits to be the word of God, I grant; in any other sense, she denies it to be the word of God. Consequently, since you would adduce it in a sense she does not authorize, if you adduce it at all, she denies what you would adduce is the word of God. You must, then, prove that it is, before you can legally adduce it."

"But you will not let me prove it."

"I do not hinder you."

"I offer to prove it by the word itself."

"That is not logical; for it would be to assume the word to prove the word."

"Not so. Here are the Scriptures, admitted by the church, when taken in their genuine sense, to be the word of God. I simply propose from them and by them to show what is their genuine sense; and if I do so, I prove by an authority which she herself concedes all that I am required to prove."

"You cannot do that, because in doing it you assume that the church is not the authorized interpreter of the word, which is the point you must prove; and that you are the authorized interpreter, which is also a point you must prove. The church simply admits that the Scriptures, taken in the sense she authorizes, are the word of God. This is the full extent of her admission. But taken in another sense, she denies them to be the word of God; for the word of God, as we have agreed, is not the words, but the sense, of the Scriptures. Consequently, before you can allege them in a sense contrary to hers, nay, before you can go into any inquiry as to their sense, you must, on the one hand, dispossess her of her prescriptive right to declare their sense, and establish your own authority as their interpreter. Till you have done one or the other, the sense of Scripture is not an open question, and you cannot open it without assuming the point in dispute."

"That denies absolutely my right to quote the Scriptures against the church."

"Not absolutely. You may quote them in her sense against her, if you can; and in your own sense, when you have proved it to be the word of God."

"But the first would be of no avail, because she has taken care to explain the Scriptures in her own favor; and I cannot prove them to be the word of God in any other sense, unless I am at liberty to explain them by themselves."

"That is, you cannot prove your point, unless you are at liberty to prove the same by the same! Prove that you are authorized to declare the sense of Scripture, and then you will have no difficulty."

"But I cannot prove that I am, save from the word itself."

"That is to say, unless you are at liberty to assume and exercise the authority to declare the sense of Scripture, as the condition of proving that you have such authority! That will not do, brother. It would be proving *idem per idem*, the same by the same, which is bad logic."

"How, then, am I to proceed?"

"That is your affair, not mine."

"The church spreads her claim over every thing, and leaves me, according to your principles of logic, no possible means of adopting any line of argument against her, which does not, in some sense, assume the point to be proved. So subtle and crafty in her tyranny, that it leaves absolutely nothing to those who would resist it. This to me is only another evidence of her wicked origin and pernicious influence."

"So you are of opinion, that, if Almighty God should establish a church, he would take good care to leave it open to attack, to give its enemies a fair and solid ground on which to carry on their operations against it! I am of a different opinion, and predisposed to believe the Almighty to be more than a match for the devil, and that, if he should establish a church, he would so constitute it that no attack could be made upon it which should not recoil upon those who made it,—no argument be framed against it which should not serve to demonstrate the folly and absurdity of its framers. It is unquestionably a very difficult matter to make an action lie against the church, or to find a court in which an action can be legally commenced against her; but I have yet to learn that this is her fault. The church is in possession of universal and supreme authority under God, has a *prescriptive* right to that authority, and must be presumed to have a *valid* right to it till the contrary is shown. You cannot *assume* the contrary, but are bound to *prove* it. Now you must prove it without authority, or with

authority. Without authority you cannot prove it; for proofs which are sustained by no authority prove nothing. You must, then, prove it with authority, or not prove it at all. That it is difficult to find any authority whose assertion does not assume the nullity of the supreme authority which is to be presumed, is undoubtedly true. You wish to arraign the actual possessor of the supreme authority, but you cannot do so unless you have some court of competent jurisdiction. But any court which should claim authority to issue a precept against the possessor of supreme authority, and summon him to answer at its bar, would assume authority over him, and by so doing prejudge the case. This is in the nature of things, and cannot be avoided; but whose is the fault? The reformers, if they had been lawyers, would have seen that what they attempted was against law, and a *prima facie* crime on their part, for which they were liable to suffer the full vengeance of the law. If they had been even tolerable logicians, they would have seen that they could urge no argument which did not assume what was in question. But surely the church is not to be censured, because they were miserable pettifoggers and shallow sophists."

"But there is a court competent to institute proceedings against the church."

"What court?"

"The court of conscience."

"You must prove that conscience is supreme, before you can say that; for the church, as the vicegerent of the Almighty, claims and possesses jurisdiction over conscience, and is supreme judge *in foro conscientiæ*. This is an integral part of her possession to which she has a prescriptive right. You must dispossess her, before you can compel her to plead at the bar of conscience."

"But she is at least bound to answer at the bar of the Bible, interpreted by private reason."

"Not till you dispossess her, or place the Bible interpreted by private reason in possession; for she possesses jurisdiction over them."

"At the bar of reason, then."

"Reason has and can have no jurisdiction in the premises; for the question turns on a supernatural fact, lies within the supernatural order, and therefore out of the province of reason."

"The general sense of mankind."

"That is against you, and in favor of the church, as we have already seen, and is conceded in the fact that the church is allowed to plead prescription."

"Then to the written word, interpreted and its sense declared by the Holy Ghost."

"Establish the fact of such a court, and she will not refuse to appear and answer. But she claims to be that court herself, and is in possession as that court; you must dispossess her by direct impeachment of her claims, or by establishing, before a competent tribunal, the rights of an adverse claimant, before you can allege such a court."

"The reformers were aided by the private illumination of the Holy Ghost, and what they did, they did in obedience to his commands."

"That was for them to prove."

"They did prove it."

"How?"

"From the written word."

"But they could prove nothing from the written word, for they had no legal possession of it."

"They had legal possession of it. The Holy Ghost gave them legal possession of it."

"What and where was the evidence of that fact, if fact it was?"

"In the Scriptures."

"That is, they proved by the Holy Spirit that they had legal possession of the Holy Scriptures, and by the Holy Scriptures that they had the Holy Ghost! But this was to reason in a *vicious circle.*"

"The reformers set forth other and conclusive reasons for rejecting the church, which I will reproduce on another day; but you must excuse me now, for I have some parochial duties to which I must attend."

"So you give up the first reason, namely, our Lord founded no such church as the Catholic?"

"Not by any means. I may have erred in bringing that forward before the others. I ought not to have departed from the example of the reformers. They did not allege that reason first, and I see now that they were wise in not doing so. They first proved that the church had forfeited her rights, by having abused her trusts. Having thus ejected her, they took possession of the word, and easily and clearly demonstrated that she had been null from the beginning, by showing that our Lord never contemplated such a church."

"That is, they dispossessed themselves by acquiring possession. Very good Protestant law and logic."

"You may spare your sneer, for perhaps it will soon be retorted with seven-fold vengeance."

"O, not so bad as that, I hope."

"We shall see. I will, God willing, prove that the reformers were rigid reasoners, and sound lawyers."

"An Herculean task. Clearing the Augean stables was easy compared with it."

"The reformers were great and glorious men, rare men, the like of whom will not soon be seen again."

"Some consolation in that."

"To call such men miserable pettifoggers and shallow sophists is——"

"To use soft words, which turn away wrath."

"To outrage common sense and common decency."

"Why, would you censure me for not calling them by harder names? I might have easily done so, but I wished to spare your prejudices as much as possible."

"I tell you, John, that, in becoming a miserable idolatrous Papist, and drunk with the cup of that sorceress of Babylon, the mother of every abomination, you seem to have lost all sense of dignity, all self-respect, and all regard for the proprieties of civilized life."

"Because I do not rave and rant, every time I have occasion to allude to the chiefs of the Protestant rebellion?"

"No; you know that is not what I mean. You degrade yourself in speaking so contemptously of the glorious reformers."

"And what does my most excellent, amiable, polite, and sweet-spoken brother do, when he calls God's Holy Church the sorceress of Babylon, &c., and brands the members of her holy communion with the name of idolaters?"

CHAPTER VII.

Only a few days elapsed before John, finding his brother apparently at leisure, pressed him to redeem his promise.

"You are prepared, brother, by this time, I presume, to undertake your vindication of the reformers, and to prove that they were sound lawyers and rigid reasoners."

"The church has so spread out her claims over every thing, that it is hard to construct an argument against her, which does not apparently take for granted some point

which she contends is the point to be proved; but the devil, though cunning, can be outwitted."

"What! by heretics?"

"Protestants are not heretics."

"The church is in possession; and since Protestants break away from her and contend for what she declares to be contrary to the faith, they are at least presumptively heretics, and are to be treated as such, unless they prove the contrary."

"The church is in possession *de facto*, not *de jure*. She is a usurper."

"Possession *de facto*, we have agreed, is *prima facie* evidence of title. The reformers were, therefore, as we have seen, bound either to admit it, or show good and valid reasons for questioning it."

"True; but they showed such reasons."

"So you have said, but you have not told me the reasons themselves."

"I gave you as one of those reasons, the fact that our Lord founded no such church as the Romish."

"But that was a reason you could not assign, because the simple fact of the existence of the church in possession was *prima facie* evidence to the contrary."

"I offered to prove my position from the word of God."

"But could not, because the church was in possession as the keeper and interpreter of the word, and you could not adduce it in a sense contrary to hers without begging the question."

"I have the word as well as she, and it interprets itself."

"That you have the word, or that it interprets itself, you were not able to prove. Moreover, the argument may be retorted. The church has the word as well as you, and the word interprets itself. She alleges that the word is against you, and her allegation, at the very lowest, is as good against your position as yours is against hers."

"I deny her infallibility."

"Do you claim infallibility for yourself?"

"I claim infallibility for the word of God."

"That is what logicians call *ignorantia elenchi*. But do you claim infallibility for your own private understanding of the word?"

"No."

"Then you are fallible, and may fall into error?"

"I do not deny it."

"The church, at the very worst, is only fallible, and therefore, at the very worst, is as good as you at the very best, for at the very best you are not infallible. Consequently, your allegations of what is the word of God can never be a sufficient motive for setting aside hers. Nothing, then, which you can adduce from the Scriptures, even conceding you all the right to appeal to them you claim, can be sufficient to invalidate her title. As she, at worst, stands on as high ground as you can even at best, her simple declaration that the word of God is in her favor is as good as any declarations you can make to the contrary. The proof, then, which you offered to introduce, would have availed you nothing, even if you had been permitted to introduce it."

"I do not admit that. I offered to prove, and I am able to prove, from the Holy Scriptures, that our Lord founded no such church as the Romish."

"It is certain that you can introduce no passage of Scripture which expressly, in so many words, declares that our Lord founded no such church. If, then, you can prove it from the Scriptures at all, you can prove it only by means of the interpretations you put upon the sacred text. But, at any rate, and on any conceivable hypothesis, the church has as much right to interpret the sacred text as you have, and her interpretations have, to say the least, as high authority as, granting you all you ask, yours can have. But she interprets the word in her favor, and, according to her interpretations of the word, it is clear and undeniable that it is in her favor, and that our Lord did found such a church as she claims to be. Since, then, your interpretations can never be a sufficient motive for setting aside hers, for they at best can be no better than hers at worst, it follows necessarily that you can never, under any hypothesis, prove from the Scriptures against her, that our Lord did *not* found such a church as she assumes to be. All this I could say, even waiving the argument from prescription. But I do not waive that argument. You have conceded that the church was in possession. She is, then, presumptively what she claims to be. Then her interpretations are presumptively the true interpretations, and yours against her presumptively false. For you to say, then, that no such church was ever instituted, is a plain begging of the question, and so is every argument you can construct against her, drawn from the Holy Scriptures."

"But I may disprove the claims of the Romish Church by

proving positively that some other church is the one actually founded by our Lord."

"Unquestionably; but you cannot plead at one and the same time an adverse title, and that no such title was ever issued. If you plead that there was no such church ever instituted, you are debarred from pleading an adverse title; for you plead that the church has no title, because none was ever issued. If none was ever issued, there can be none in an adverse claimant. On the other hand, if you plead an adverse title, you concede, what you have denied, that our Lord did institute such a church as the Catholic Church claims to be; that the title she possesses has been issued and vests somewhere. This changes the whole question. There is no longer any controversy between us as to the fact whether our Lord did or did not found a church in the sense alleged, but simply a question whether it be the Roman Catholic Church or some other."

"Grant that our Lord did found such a church as is pretended,—and I believe in the Holy Catholic Church as well as you,—still I deny that it is the Romish Church."

"You join a new issue, then, and plead now, not no title, but an *adverse* title?"

"Be it so, for the present."

"And what is the adverse claimant you set up against Rome?"

"The church of which, by God's grace, I am an unworthy minister."

"That is to say, the Presbyterian?"

"Yes. The Presbyterian Church is the visible Catholic Church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."

"So says the Westminster Confession of Faith. But which Presbyterian church do you mean?"

"I do not understand you."

"There are, you know, brother, quite a number of Presbyterian churches, for instance, in Scotland, the Kirk by law established, the Free Kirk, and the Seceders; in this country, the Old School, the New School, and the Cumberland Presbyterians; in England, the Presbyterian Dissenters, for the most part Unitarian; and on the Continent, the Dutch Reformed, the Reformed German, the Genevan, and the French Huguenots, all virtually Presbyterian churches, and very generally fallen into Socinianism, rationalism, deism, or transcendentalism. Which of these, not to mention several others, is the one you mean?"

"It is not necessary to particularize; I mean the Presbyterian Church in general."

"Do you include even those who have become Socinian, rationalistic, deistical, transcendental?"

"It is to be regretted that in many of the old Presbyterian churches grievous, and, as I hold, damnable, errors have crept in."

"But are those which have lapsed into these damnable errors still integral portions of the Presbyterian Church? Do you claim the English Presbyterians, the Genevan, and French?"

"The church is never free from error, taken as a whole, but there are always in the church a remnant who are faithful, and somewhere in it there is always the pure preaching of the word, as well as the maintenance of the true ordinances of God's house."

"You forget that you have just conceded that our Lord did found such a church as the Roman Catholic claims to be; but the Roman Catholic Church claims to have authority from God to teach, and to teach everywhere, and at all times, one and the same doctrine, free from all admixture of error."

"I do not forget what I have conceded. I say, in the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, that 'the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth to worship God according to his will.'"

"But this does not relieve you, for it says positively the purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error. Then there is no church not liable to error and corruption. Then, whatever your Presbyterian Church may claim, it does not claim, even as the church, to be able to teach infallibly; therefore does not even claim to be such a church as the Roman Catholic Church claims to be. Consequently she cannot be set up as an adverse claimant. The title she claims is not the title the Catholic Church claims, and therefore, if established, does not necessarily negative hers. If, then, you concede that our Lord did found such a church as the Roman Catholic Church claims to be, you must concede that it is not the Presbyterian."

"Not at all; for does not the Confession say, 'Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth which shall worship God according to his will?'"

"True; but this either amounts to nothing, or it contradicts what you have just alleged. If it means that there shall always be on earth a church which teaches God's word infallibly, then it is false to say that the purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error; but if it means that the church which worships God according to his will is not free from mixture and error, it amounts to nothing, for it proposes no church claiming to be what the Catholic Church claims to be, since it is undeniable that she claims to teach without the least mixture or error."

"But one may be subject to error, and yet not err in fact. The church is not exempt from the liability to err, but there is always a portion of it which, as a matter of fact, does not err."

"What prevents it?"

"The grace of God; for God will not suffer the gates of hell wholly to prevail against his church."

"Very well; but is the church, what your Confession calls the 'visible Catholic Church,' herself always preserved by this grace from error? and if so, can she be said to be subject to error?"

"The visible Catholic Church consists of all those persons throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. There is always a portion of these who are, though grace, preserved from error; and therefore there is always a church or body of worshippers who worship God according to his will. In some periods the number of these is very small, in others it is large."

"But you do not answer my question. Individuals may err, particular branches of the church may fail; but does the church, the teaching and judging authority of the church, in matters of faith and morals, ever err?"

"Individual members and particular churches may err, but God always preserves some individuals who do not err, who are witnesses for him in the darkest and worst of times. Consequently, the whole church never falls into error."

"But your Confession declares the visible Catholic Church to be a *kingdom*. Jesus Christ, it says, 'hath erected in this world a *kingdom*, which is his church.' Now to a kingdom it is essential that there be a supreme authority. There may be provincial and communal governments with local authority, customs, and usages, but they must all be subordinated to one supreme central authority, or else you have not one kingdom, but as many separate kingdoms as you have sepa-

rate local governments. The kingdom erected by our Lord is one, not many, and therefore must have somewhere, somehow constituted, a supreme central authority, from which all the subordinate authorities derive their authority, and to which they are responsible. This supreme central authority is, in the case of the church, the church teaching and governing, and is what is specially meant by *the church*, when speaking of its fallibility or infallibility. Now my question is, whether the church herself, that is, the supreme central authority from which all the particular and local authorities are derived, is subject to error, or by grace rendered infallible."

"I know no such authority as you speak of but that of Jesus Christ himself, who is the head and husband of the faithful, and he of course cannot err."

"You admit that the church is a *kingdom?*"

"Yes."

"And a kingdom erected in *this world?*"

"I do."

"And that where there is no supreme central authority there is no kingdom?"

"There must be such authority, but it may be in Jesus Christ, who is the invisible head of the church."

"It is the authority that constitutes the kingdom, not the kingdom the authority for prior to the authority, the kingdom is not. The authority and kingdom must be in the same order. If, then, the kingdom is in the visible order, the authority which makes it a visible kingdom must be in the visible order, and therefore itself be visible. You could not call Great Britain or France a visible kingdom, if one or the other had no visible supreme authority The most you could say would be, that there is an invisible kingdom in Great Britain or France, not that either is itself a visible kingdom. So of the church. If it is a visible kingdom, it must have a supreme visible authority; if not, it is not a visible, but an invisible kingdom. The individuals might be visible as individuals, but not as members of the church, or subjects of the invisible authority. In such case, the distinction your Confession makes, and which you contend for, between the visible church, and the invisible, would be a distinction without a difference. When, therefore, you tell me, as you do in your Confession, that the visible church is *a kingdom in this world*, you necessarily tell me that it has in this world a supreme visible central authority. And in

point of fact, Presbyterians themselves do recognize such authority; for they regard their church as a polity, and it has its constitution, its officers, its supreme legislature, and supreme judicatory. If not, what means the General Assembly, which 'represents in one body' all the particular churches of the Presbyterian denomination, and to which belongs 'the power of deciding in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline; of reproving, warning, of bearing testimony against error in doctrine, or immorality in practice, in any church, presbytery, or synod; of erecting new synods when it shall be judged necessary; of superintending the concerns of the whole church; . . . . . of suppressing schismatical contentions and disputations,' &c., and to which every candidate for ordination must promise obedience and subjection?"

"There is a supreme visible government of the church, *under God*, I admit."

"*Under God;* and who ever dreamed of a supreme government of the church *over* God?"

"The Papists."

"Nonsense! Do you not know that Catholics hold Jesus Christ to be the supreme invisible Head of the church, and that they call the pope his vicar? If the pope is the *vicar* of Jesus Christ, how can he be above him? God is supreme, the sovereign of sovereigns, and there is no power not from him and subject to him. So no more of this nonsense. But you hold the church to be a kingdom or polity, do you not?"

"I do."

"And as such it has its government, its supreme authority; for if not, it is no kingdom or polity."

"Be it so."

"Now, what I ask is, Does this supreme authority, such as it is in the Presbyterian Church, claim to be infallible in all that concerns faith and morals?"

"It does not."

"Then your plea of an adverse title amounts to nothing; the title you allege is not the negative of that claimed by the church. The title she claims is that of an infallible teacher of God's word, the title you set up is that of a fallible teacher, which you may well be without prejudice to her claim; for you can claim to teach *fallibly* without denying her claim to teach *infallibly*."

"But were I to grant this, it would not follow that the claim of Rome must be conceded."

"Not from this fact alone; but as you have conceded that the title was issued, and must vest somewhere, in some one, it follows necessarily that it vests in the Roman Catholic Church, if it vests in no one else. And as she is in possession, you must concede it to her, unless you can produce and establish an adverse title."

"The Greek Church has as good a title as the Romish."

"That is not to the purpose. The Greek Church has either a valid title, or none at all. It is not enough to say that she has as good a title as the Roman Church; you must say she has a perfect title, or say nothing."

"I say, then, she has a perfect title."

"Then she is the church of God. Why, then, are you not in her communion?"

"That is neither here nor there. You have no right to conclude any thing to her prejudice from my practice. I may be inconsistent. What then?"

"But she condemns you, and has solemnly anathematized every one of your doctrines, with a single exception, in which you depart from the teachings of the Roman Church."

"Be it so; what then? That may prove that we Protestants are wrong, but not that she is wrong, or you right."

"Moreover, she does not even claim to be the One Holy Catholic Church, and to have the supreme central authority over the whole body of the faithful throughout the world. She does not pretend to unchurch the church of Rome, or even that the Roman Church does or ever did owe subjection to her. She admits, even to this day, the Roman Catholic Church to be truly the church of Christ in what was originally the patriarchate of the West, that the pope is the legitimate patriarch of the West, and rightfully exercises patriarchal authority over that patriarchate. She does not claim and never has claimed for herself the title she denies to Rome. She denies the supreme authority over the whole church claimed and exercised by the pope, not because she claims the supremacy for herself, but because she denies that any such supremacy was conferred on any one in the original constitution of the church. She is, then, no adverse claimant, and in all essential respects, except this one, she concedes virtually, if not expressly, the title claimed by Rome, at least so far as it is now in question. So you cannot get an adverse claimant in the Greek Church. Indeed, when you have once conceded that our Lord founded such a church as the Roman claims to be, you must concede

that the Roman is that church, for there is no other that even claims to be it."

"That is hardly true The Anglican Church claims to be it."

"The Anglican Church, as well as your own, puts on lofty airs, and she now and then tells us gravely that she is Catholic,—not *Roman*, but *Catholic*,—and lets off her double battery of popguns on the one hand against Rome, and on the other against Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, &c.; but she has not courage enough to claim to be the Catholic Church in its unity and integrity. She claims, at most, to be only a branch of it, which implies that the root and trunk are elsewhere; and she does not even pretend that the supreme visible central authority she obeys or exercises is the supreme visible central authority of the whole church of Christ. Moreover, she confesses that she is fallible, that she has heretofore erred grievously in doctrine and manners, and may err again. Her claim, therefore, is not the same as that of the Roman Church, and her title is not, strictly speaking, an adverse title. So you can succeed no better with her than with the Greek Church, or than with your own."

CHAPTER VIII.

"But you told me the other day," replied James, after a short pause, "that the essential character of the Romish Church is, that she claims to have received a divine commission or authority to teach, or to keep and declare the word of God."

"To keep and expound or teach the word of God, I grant; but I conceded this only so far as concerned the special controversy in which we were engaged, as I then told you. Nevertheless, I admit now that the essential claim of the church is, that she has been divinely commissioned or authorized to teach the word of God."

"Then you must concede that any other church claiming to be divinely commissioned is an adverse claimant."

"Divinely commissioned *to teach*, granted."

"Then it is not true that there is no adverse claimant against Rome, as you so confidently assert; for, in point of fact, the Greek Church, the Presbyterian, and the Anglican each claims for itself to be divinely commissioned."

"The Greek Church claims the commission for herself in

no sense in which she does not concede it to Rome, and therefore is not an *adverse* claimant. The Presbyterian and Anglican Churches do not in reality claim it at all; for both deny the fact of a divine commission in denying the infallibility of the church."

"But to deny the infallibility is not necessarily to deny the divine commission of the teacher; and, therefore, not to claim the infallibility is not to fail to claim the commission."

"The commission in question is the commission to teach, and must be the warrant of infallibility in the teacher, unless God can authorize the teaching of error."

"That proves too much. All the teachers of your church, you hold, are divinely commissioned; but you cannot hold that each is infallible; for, if you should, you would be obliged to hold that Luther himself did not err, since, as is well known, he was at first a Romish doctor."

"The teachers of the church are all divinely commissioned to teach in communion with and in subordination to the sovereign pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, I admit, and so long as they so teach, they teach infallibly; but when they break away from that communion, and assume to be independent teachers, they are fallible; for then they have no divine commission."

"Is there any of these teachers, taken individually, who may not break from that communion, and assume to be an independent teacher?"

"No one except the pope himself."

"What, then, is your warrant that your particular teacher does not err?"

"The fact that he teaches in communion with and in subordination to the sovereign pontiff."

"So the pope is his voucher?"

"Communion with the pope."

"Who vouches for the pope?"

"The divine commission, which gives him, as the successor of St. Peter, plenary authority to teach and declare the word of God."

"If the pope should fail, your whole church might fall to the ground."

"Not necessarily; but the pope cannot fail, because he is divinely commissioned. As the successor of St. Peter, he inherits the authority of St. Peter, and the promise made to him,—'Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The pope, there

fore, since he has the promise of God, cannot fail, unless God himself can fail, which is not supposable."

"But your argument, nevertheless, proves too much; for all legitimate civil governments are divinely commissioned, and yet no man can pretend that they are infallible."

"Commissioned to govern, but not to teach or declare the word of God. There is a difference between the commission to govern and the commission to teach. Teaching has reference to the conscience, to the internal act of the man; government only to external acts. The teacher is commissioned to teach the truth; government is commissioned simply to control and direct the external acts for the general good, according to the rules of prudence; and to attain its end, it is not essential that it should be able to propose measures which are absolutely in all and every respect the wisest and the best; nor is it necessary, in order to believe it for the general good, and to obey all its commands, that the subject should believe it infallible, or that it can never err in any one of its measures. He can obey an unwise order, and it may be for the general good that sometimes he should do so. But the end of teaching is the proposition and belief of the truth. All teaching is in order to truth. If the teacher be fallible, the end of teaching is not secured; for he may propose, and I may believe, on his proposition, what is not true. The commission is authority from God to teach, and a command to those the teacher is commissioned to teach to believe as the truth, and nothing but the truth, what he teaches. If fallible, then, he may propose and I believe, on *divine authority*, what is false; and then God may authorize the teaching and the believing of falsehood,—which cannot be; for he is infinitely true, and can neither be deceived nor deceive, which would not be the fact, if he could authorize the teaching or the believing of falsehood. Therefore, the divine commission to teach—and it is only of the commission to teach that I speak—must necessarily be the warrant of infallibility in the teacher."

"Though the divinely commissioned teacher be assumed to be infallible, the commission is not itself necessarily and essentially a warrant of his infallibility."

"To the full extent of the matter covered by the commission it is, you yourself do and must admit."

"I do not admit it. A commission, by the simple fact that it is a commission, does no such thing; for a govern-

ment may commission an ambassador, and yet that ambassador may misrepresent its will and intention."

"Commissions in general may not, but the divine commission to teach does. Human governments have no power to secure the infallibility of their ministers; but you cannot say this of God. He can make his ministers infallible."

"He can; but it does not therefore follow that he does."

"I have shown that he must, because he cannot authorize either the teaching or the believing of error, without contradicting his own nature, which is infinitely and essentially true; and that he does, to the full extent of their commission to teach, you yourself do and must hold, or give up all belief in external revelation."

"Not at all."

"Why do you believe our Lord was the Son of God?"

"Because he himself so declared."

"Why do you believe his declarations?"

"Because he was the Son of God, and could not lie."

"A good reason, after it is proved that he was the Son of God; none at all before."

"I believe him because the miracles he performed proved that he was from God; for no man could do the miracles he did, unless God were with him."

"Was *from* God, that is, sent or commissioned by God as a teacher, but not that he was God."

"The miracles proved him to be God. He raised the dead, and none but God can raise the dead."

"None but God can raise the dead as *efficient* cause; but men as *instrumental* cause may raise them, as is shown by the fact that the apostles and many of the saints have raised the dead. How, then, from the miracle alone conclude that our Lord raised the dead, not as instrumental cause, but as *efficient* cause?"

"The efficient cause was the divine power."

"Granted. But the divine power inherent in Jesus, as his own proper power, or the divine power merely displayed on the occasion of his saying to the dead, Arise? Moses smote the rock, and the water gushed out. Was it Moses, or God who stood behind Moses, that caused the water to flow from the rock?"

"God who stood behind him."

"So, for aught the miracle itself says, it may have been, not Jesus himself, but God who stood behind him, that caused the dead to live. The miracle does not prove the

proper divinity of our Lord. It only proves that he was sent from God, and that God was with him, and displayed his almighty power at his word."

"Very well."

"The miracles having proved that our Lord was from God, that God sent him and was with him, you *therefore* believe what he said. He said he was the Son of God, and therefore you believe he was the Son of God, and therefore God himself."

"Be it so."

"The miracles, then, simply proved his divine commission, that is, accredited him as a teacher sent from God. But how from the fact of his commission conclude the truth of what he said, if the divine commission be not the warrant of infallibility? If one who is divinely commissioned to teach, notwithstanding his commission, may err, how can you say that our Lord himself did not err, and that you do not err in believing him to be the Son of God? Indeed, it is only on the ground that the divine commission is the warrant of infallibility, that your profession of faith in the Bible as the infallible word of God is not ridiculous and absurd."

"The sacred writers were inspired, but the divinely commissioned teachers you speak of are not. Being inspired, they could know the truth of what they affirmed; and being honest and godly men, they would not affirm what they did not know."

"That is nothing to your purpose. The inspiration was nothing more nor less than God simply telling or communicating to them what they were to teach, and they have in this respect no advantage over the church, in case she be fully instructed as to what she is to propose as the word of God. If instructed, it matters not, as to her ability to teach, whether instructed by immediate inspiration to herself, or only mediately through that of the prophets and apostles. She claims to have been fully instructed, for the commission under which she professes to act was, 'Going, teach all nations; . . . . . teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*'—St. Matt. xxviii. 19. The alleged defect of immediate inspiration in her case, or its presence in the case of the sacred writers, can, therefore, of itself, be no reason for believing one in preference to the other. The real reason for believing the sacred writers is, that God authorized them to teach; and

you have the same reason for believing the church, if you have equal reasons for believing her authorized by God to teach his word. The commission is a warrant of infallibility in her case, as much as it was in theirs."

"But you forget that I gave as my reason for believing the sacred writers, that they were honest and godly men, and would not affirm what they did not know."

"You, then, consider the personal character of the teacher better authority than the divine commission? This is a common Protestant blunder, and hence the worthlessness of the greater part of your treatises on the evidences of Christianity. God's authority for believing is not sufficient till man indorses it! The best men are fallible, and may be deceived. If we had nothing but the personal characters of the sacred writers on which to rely, honest and godly as they certainly were, we should have no sufficient reason for believing what they wrote to be the Word of God. Their personal character may be important when the question turns on their credibility as witnesses to the facts they record, but does not enter into the account when the question is on their authority as teachers of revealed truth. No man's personal character is a sufficient warrant for believing that any thing he asserts to be a doctrine of revelation is really and truly a doctrine of revelation. If it were, we should be obliged to believe whatever any man, whose character, so far as we know, is honest and irreproachable, chooses to teach as the word of God. How, then, can you maintain that the personal character of the teacher is a surer warrant of infallibility than the divine commission?"

"The simple fact that the sacred writers were honest and godly men may not be alone a sufficient reason for believing them, yet, if they had been bad men, that would alone have been a sufficient reason for *not* believing them. For God does not and will not speak by bad men."

"That is not so certain. Balaam, the son of Peor, was a bad man; yet God spoke by him, and caused him to utter a glorious prophecy. Do you believe his prophecy on his personal character, or because divinely commissioned teachers have told you that it was not he who spoke from himself, but the Lord who spoke by him?"

"I believe the sacred writers because God authorized them to teach his word, and the Holy Ghost was with them to enable them to teach it, and to preserve them from error in teaching it."

"Is not the assistance of the Holy Ghost, so far as needed, necessarily implied in the commission or authority to teach?"

"If the commission were the warrant of infallibility, it would be so implied; but that is precisely what I deny."

"No man can teach infallibly without it?"

"No."

"But with it any man can teach infallibly?"

"Perhaps so."

"No *perhaps* about it. It must be so positively, or you cannot assert the infallibility of the sacred penmen."

"God leaves the will free; any one who has the assistance may teach infallibly, if he chooses; but it does not therefore follow that he must and will so teach."

"In what concerns personal morality, natural or Christian, the will is free; but in teaching at the command of God, it is not. The individual speaks not as moved by his own will, but as moved by the Holy Ghost. Thus, Balaam was forced against his will to bless Israel, and to utter a prophecy he did not intend, and which he was unwilling to utter; for it was against his interest, and he loved the wages of iniquity. Thus, too, the prophet Jonas sought to run away from the Lord, and not to preach as commanded to the Ninevites, but the Lord brought him back by a miracle, and forced him to utter his word. Moreover, if the matter depended on the human will, the teachings of no human teacher, however authorized and assisted by the Holy Ghost, could ever be regarded as infallible; because no one could ever know whether the teacher spoke as moved by the Holy Ghost, or merely from his own proper motion. In vain, then, would you claim to have in the Bible the *infallible* word of God. Nay, you have yourself just said, the Holy Ghost enables the teachers to teach the word, and *preserves* them from error in teaching it."

"In the case of the sacred writers, not of all men."

"For all men have not the assistance of the Holy Ghost to teach the word of God, nor are all commissioned to teach it; but if it be what you define it, any one who has it must be able to teach, and be preserved from error in teaching, and therefore must teach the word infallibly."

"Be it so."

"But the divine commission does not necessarily imply this assistance?"

"No, it does not; therefore, I admit the infallibility of the

sacred writers specially, and not of divinely commissioned teachers in general."

"What is the significance of the divine commission to teach the word of God?"

"It authorizes the one who receives it to be a teacher of God's word, but does not necessarily enable him to teach it infallibly."

"So one may have authority from God to teach his word, and yet not have the ability to teach it in the only sense in which God can authorize it to be taught! What, then, means the authority?"

"Why, it is authority to teach."

"Unquestionably, but what is that?"

"He who has it is authorized to speak or teach in the name of God."

"That is, to propound the word of God, not in his own name and on his own authority, but in the name and on the authority of God?"

"Yes, it means that he is empowered to teach with divine authority."

"Can any thing but truth be taught with divine authority?"

"No."

"God cannot authorize the teaching of error?"

"No; for that would be the same as to teach it."

"Then no one not able to teach the truth, and not preserved from error in teaching it, can be said to teach by divine authority?"

"So it would seem."

"You say that for God to authorize the teaching of error would be the same as for him to teach it?"

"I do."

"And on the principle that what is done by another's authority, it is virtually that other that does it? Thus, what the agent does by the authority of the principal is held to be done by the principal himself, who is responsible for it. What an ambassador does by the authority of his government is done by his government. Consequently, what one does by the authority of God is done by God himself, and the responsibility rests on him, and not on his agent. So what one teaches by divine authority is taught by God himself, and God is responsible for it. No one can, then, be divinely commissioned to teach what God may not himself teach immediately, and for which he will not hold himself responsible."

"I do not deny it."

"Can God teach or be responsible for error, or for any thing but truth?"

"He cannot."

"Then he can authorize no one to teach any thing but truth?"

"He cannot."

"Then he who is divinely commissioned can teach nothing but truth?"

"Apparently so."

"He who can teach nothing but truth is infallible, is he not?"

"So it would seem."

"Then the divine commission is, as I have said, the warrant of infallibility, and as one cannot be infallible without the assistance of the Holy Ghost, it necessarily implies that assistance. Consequently, the claim to the divine commission to teach the word of God is necessarily and essentially the claim to infallibility in teaching, and therefore to the assistance of the Holy Ghost, so far as needed to enable the teacher to teach the word, and to preserve him from error in teaching it. Is it not so?"

"I have been accustomed to think differently, but let it pass."

"Then my position, that the essential claim of the church is that she teaches the word infallibly, is not different from the one I assumed the other day, when I declared it to be the claim to the commission to teach, or that she had the word of God and was its legal keeper and expounder?"

"Be it so."

"Then you produce no adverse claimant, since you produce none that even pretends to be able to teach the word infallibly."

"Very well."

"But in pleading an adverse title, you conceded that the title was issued, and vests somewhere; or, in other words, that there is and must be somewhere such a church as the Roman claims to be. Now, as you do not and cannot produce an adverse claimant, you must concede that she is what she claims to be; therefore the church of God; and therefore that you and all who make war upon her are rebels and traitors to God. Is it in this way you propose to vindicate the reformers?"

Poor James was misled by his Protestant theology, which

makes every thing pertaining to religion a sham. Thus, justification is with it, not making one just, but *reputing* him just,—a forensic, not an inward, intrinsic justification. It is no real justification at all, but a mere make-believe justification,—to say nothing of the blasphemy of representing God as accounting or reputing a man just who is intrinsically unjust,—for it leaves the man as foul a sinner as he was before he was justified. So in the matter of the divine commission to teach, this same theology teaches that one may have the commission, be authorized by God to teach, and yet not teach infallibly, as if God could authorize the teaching of a lie! A queer thing is this Protestant theology! Well may its authors and adherents boast themselves the lights of the age!

This notion, that the authority does not necessarily imply the ability to teach, is the source of much of that prejudice which exists in the Protestant community against all claims to authority from God to teach his word. There is a general feeling among the great majority of intelligent Protestants, that there can be no divine authority to teach where there is not the ability to teach; and seeing nowhere among themselves any teacher who has the ability, they very naturally conclude that no one has the authority. It is absurd, say they, to suppose that God authorizes a man like ourselves to teach, a man who knows no more than we do, and is no better able to teach than the rest of us. When the Catholic speaks to them of the commission of his church to teach, and that God gives her authority to teach all nations, they turn up their noses, and ask us, if we suppose they are such fools as to believe that God, the common Father of us all, has given to mortals like ourselves authority to teach us, and commanded us to yield up our own reason and judgment to our fellow-men!

Now, probe the matter to the bottom, and you will find that these people object by no means to the idea that God may authorize men to teach his word, but simply to the notion that the authority can exist where the requisite qualifications to teach are wanting. Their real objection is to the doctrine which Mr. James Milwood attempts to maintain, that teachers confessedly fallible as teachers may nevertheless be divinely commissioned to teach. They object, not to the Catholic doctrine of authority, but to the Protestant. To really God-commissioned teachers, that is, teachers who, in their judgment, have the intrinsic ability to

teach truly and infallibly the word of God, they do not object, as is evident from their tendency to hero-worship, and their common remark that he who is able is divinely commissioned. Read Carlyle, Emerson, the transcendentalists generally, and you will find that it is always to the notion of authority without the intrinsic ability that they object, and that wherever they fancy the ability they are ready to concede the commission. They err in making the ability the warrant of the authority, instead of making the commission the warrant of the ability; yet they are right against Protestantism, and perceive a great and essential truth which old-fashioned Protestantism denies, namely, that the authority and the intrinsic ability to teach are inseparable, and that any authority separate from the ability cannot be conferred by God, and is therefore a usurpation. To one who is familiar with the Protestant community, and who comprehends its more recent developments of thought, it is evident that Protestants are very generally growing tired and sick of sham and shamming. They are rapidly becoming unable to satisfy themselves with a religion which is no real religion, but a mere make-believe religion. They cry out from the depths of their hearts for something real, for something which *is*, not merely *seems*. They see that the reformers built on mere *seeming*, and taught and acted a lie, —gave them hollow appearances, and no solid realities,—at best, the mere hull without the kernel,—a symbol symbolizing nothing,—a mere pretence; and they grow indignant, turn away in disgust, and say, "Give us something real, something that is, if it be but the devil; for any thing that *is* is better than nothing seeming to be something. If your religion is a mere sham, call it a sham and away with it; for the oldest gospel is, that a lie is a lie, and no truth. Stop lying, stop seeming, and begin to be." So deep is this feeling of the hollowness of all Protestant pretensions, and so strong is the craving for something real, that it has almost become one of the cants of the day.

It is true, that, knowing no religion but the Protestant, they to whom we refer conclude rashly that Catholicity is also a sham, also a mere hollow pretence, and that no religion is real but that of nature. But in this they draw a conclusion quite too broad for their premises. The church detests Protestantism as heartily as they do, and, in most cases, for like reasons. She detests it because it is outward, lifeless, empty, and no living reality; because it contains

nothing solid, substantial, has no bottom, but is bottomless, like the pit from which it is an exhalation, and into which, as the religious atmosphere clears up, it subsides. She condemns with all her energy whatever is mere pretence or make-believe. She tolerates no empty forms, no insignificant rites, no vain ceremonies. She will and can approve nothing which is not real, solid, substantial. She teaches the doctrine of the Real Presence, and always presents the very reality she symbolizes. She can call no man justified who is not intrinsically just, and recognize no teacher as teaching by divine authority who does not teach God's word infallibly. If these people would turn their attention to her, they would soon find the truth and reality for which their hearts cry out; for, to say the least, grace is not less true and real than nature.

CHAPTER IX.

"Unquestionably," at length James replied, "there is no other church which makes the same specific claim as the Romish, and if my plea of an adverse title is to be taken as a concession that God has founded such a church, I of course must concede that she is it, and that the reformers cannot be justified."

"I have not confined you to her *specific* character; I have only restricted you to her *generic* character, to what she must absolutely be, if a church at all, with divine authority to teach."

"Well, let that pass. I made the concession, not absolutely, but provisorily; since, as you well know, I do not and cannot, as a Presbyterian, admit that our Lord ever founded, specifically or generically, such a church as the Romish claims to be, and which is no church of Christ, but a synagogue of Satan."

"Then you retract your plea of an adverse title, and revoke your concession?"

"I do."

"Very well; as I have no wish to take advantage of your mistakes, you may do so. What do you plead now?"

"The Romish church is corrupt, and by her corruptions has forfeited her title to be the church of God."

"That is your original plea, which you withdrew for the sake of pleading that no title was ever issued, or, in other words, that our Lord had founded no such church as she

claims to be. You will remember that you cannot plead at one and the same time the forfeiture of title, and that no title ever existed. A title which never existed cannot have been forfeited. The allegation, that the church has forfeited her title, concedes, then, that the title originally existed, and was hers. Am I to understand you as meaning to concede that our Lord did originally found such a church as the Roman claims to be, and that she was originally that church?"

"Not at all. I do not admit that such a title as she claims ever existed."

"You deny, then, that our Lord ever founded such a church as she claims to be, that is, a church with authority from him to teach."

"I do."

"But she is in possession as such a church, and possession is *prima facie* evidence of title. If, then, you allege that no such title ever existed, the burden of proof is on you. But you cannot prove that no such title ever existed, as you learned in our conversation the other day. Moreover, you have just alleged forfeiture of title, which concedes that the title originally existed and was vested in the church of Rome. You cannot now deny that it ever existed."

"I admit *a* title once existed, and was vested in her, though not such a title as she claims; and when I say that she has forfeited her title, I mean not that she has forfeited such a title as she now claims, but such a title as she originally had."

"That is nothing to the purpose. But what was that title?"

"I have told you already, in declaring that she has forfeited her title to be the Church of God. I do not deny that the church of Rome was once a pure church, but I contend that she is now corrupt, and no longer God's church, or any portion of it."

"But the pure church, the church of God, is either such a church as the Roman claims to be, or a different church."

"It is widely different."

"Is the church of God one, or many?"

"Properly speaking, there is but one church, although the one church may be composed of many particular churches."

"But such must be the character of the particular churches as not to detract from the real unity of the whole?"

"Granted."

"And this one church composed of many particular churches is *the* church and the *only* church our Lord founded?"

"It is."

"And it is widely different from such a church as the Roman claims to be?"

"Certainly it is."

"Then you simply deny that our Lord ever founded such a church as the Roman claims to be, and merely reiterate the plea you have withdrawn."

"I do not care for that; I am not to be tied down by your arbitrary rules of special pleading. The church of Rome was once pure. She then belonged to the church of God; she is now corrupt, and has forfeited her title. I do not say her title to be such a church as she pretends to be, but to be an integral part of the church of God."

"She has degenerated from her original purity, and is now a corrupt church?"

"That is what I allege."

"But she is in possession as the pure and authoritative church of God, and the burden of proof that she is corrupt is on you."

"I accept it, and am ready to prove her corruption."

"Corruption implies a change from a former or primitive state. You must know that state, or you cannot know that she is corrupt."

"She has corrupted the word of God; she teaches the commandments of men for the pure word; and has so disfigured the original gospel of our Lord, that it can be no longer recognized in her teachings."

"That is for you to prove."

"I am ready to prove it. Indeed, it needs no proof. It is notorious. The world admits it. She has become a sink of corruption; is full of all manner of uncleanness and filth."

"Words, brother; mere words. Pause a moment and take breath, and then proceed to the proof. When you tell me the Catholic Church is corrupt, has degenerated, you assume a primitive state from which she has fallen; and it is only by comparing her present state with that primitive state, that you can determine that she has fallen from it. What, then, was that primitive state?"

"I can show what it was from the Scriptures."

"They are not in your possession. You are not their legal keeper, and have no authority to expound their sense. You can therefore make no appeal to them against the church who is in possession, and has, presumptively, the sole right to interpret them. She interprets them in her favor, and you are bound to presume her interpretations to be correct, till you can prove by a competent authority to the contrary. This competent authority you are not; for, on any conceivable hypothesis, at the very worst her authority is as good as yours can be at the very best. You must get a commission, or at least a *presumptive* commission, from Almighty God, as the legal keeper and expounder of the Sacred Scriptures, before you can prove any thing from them but your own arrogance and impudence."

"I can prove from the early fathers that the primitive church was essentially different from the present Romish Church."

"That is, you can prove it from early tradition?"

"Yes."

"But the church is in possession as the keeper and expounder of primitive tradition, as well as of the Sacred Scriptures. She interprets it in her own favor, and from it proves that she conforms perfectly to the primitive model."

"But she misinterprets the fathers."

"As a matter of fact, it is undeniable that the fathers may without violence be interpreted as she interprets them, and that she rightly interprets them is to be presumed, till the contrary is shown. Moreover, as her authority as the interpreter of primitive tradition, or of the fathers, is at the worst equal to yours at the best, you have and can have no sufficient authority for setting her interpretation aside. So the appeal to primitive tradition will avail you no more than the appeal to the Scriptures; and the fact that you have no authority to declare the sense of either debars you from all right to appeal to either against what she declares to be their sense."

"But she has corrupted the primitive faith."

"You cannot say that, unless you are authorized to say what the primitive faith was. She has presumptively the right to declare that faith, and she declares that it was what she now teaches, and therefore she declares that she has not corrupted it. You are bound to presume that she has not, and must prove that she has, before you can use an argu-

ment which *assumes* that she has. But what was the original faith which she has corrupted?"

"There is a great number of doctrines which she has corrupted. It is not necessary to mention all. Take, for instance, the doctrine of justification. The primitive doctrine was, that man is justified by faith alone; the Romish doctrine is, that man is justified by works."

"The Catholic doctrine is, that man is justified by faith and works, meaning thereby works done through grace purchased for us by the merits of our Lord; but on what authority do you assert that the primitive doctrine was, that man is justified by faith alone?"

"The Holy Scriptures."

"On what authority do you assert that the Holy Scriptures teach it?"

"Why, they teach it."

"You either have authority for saying so, or you have not. But you have not, as is certain from the fact that you have no authority to keep and expound the Scriptures. Then you say it without authority. An assertion made without any authority is worthless, and not to be entertained. Here is the answer to every instance of corruption of doctrine you do or can allege. In confessing the fallibility of your sect, you have confessed that you have no authority from God to teach his word. Then you have no authority for declaring what was the primitive faith, and then none for saying that the church has corrupted it."

"But the Romish Church has forfeited her title to be considered the church of God by authorizing superstition and idolatry, for evidently no church that authorizes these can be the church of God."

"That is something to your purpose, and you will be entitled to a judgment, if the evidence sustains you. You take now the only ground from which you can legitimately frame an argument against the church. Every previous ground you have taken has been untenable, because it required the authority to maintain it which you were contesting, and which you had not, and were obliged to presume to be in the church herself. You undertook to prosecute her under the law of grace, and failed for the want of a court of competent jurisdiction. As she is presumptively the supreme court, under the law of grace, you could under that law institute no process against her; for to every allegation you could make she had only to plead want of juris-

diction. The only possible way of prosecuting her is under the law of nature, and it is only by proving her to have violated some precept of that law, that you can obtain judgment against her. The law of nature falls, to some extent, under the jurisdiction of reason, and reason, to that extent, is its legal keeper and judge, and has the right to sit in judgment on its infractions. As the law of nature and that of grace both have the same origin, are enacted by the same sovereign Lawgiver, and as the latter confessedly presupposes the former and confirms it, it can never authorize what the former prohibits, any more than the former can authorize what the latter prohibits, unless we may suppose, what is not supposable, that God may be in contradiction with himself. The law of grace transcends the law of nature, but does not and cannot enjoin what it forbids. As superstition and idolatry are undeniably forbidden by the law of nature, if you prove that they are authorized, or in any sense sanctioned, by the church, you prove that she is not and cannot be the church of God. But she does not authorize or sanction them; she strictly forbids them. Thus, in her catechism for children she teaches the child to ask and answer:—

"'*What is forbidden by this* [the first] *commandment?*

"'To worship false gods or idols; or to give any thing else whatsoever the honor which belongs to God.

"'*What else is forbidden by this commandment?*

"'All false religions; all dealings with the devil; and inquiring after things to come, or secret things, by fortune-tellers or superstitious practices.

"'*What else?*

"'All charms, spells, and heathenish observation of omens, dreams, and such like fooleries.

"'*Does this commandment forbid the making of images?*

"'It forbids making them so as to adore them; that is, it forbids making them our gods.

"'*Does this commandment forbid all honor and veneration of saints and angels?*

"'No, we are to honor them as God's special friends and servants; but not with the honor which belongs to God.

"'*And is it allowable to honor relics, crucifixes, and holy pictures?*

"'Yes; with an inferior and relative honor, as they relate to Christ and his saints, and are memorials of them.

"'*May we, then, pray to relics and images?*

"'No, by no means; for they have no life or sense to hear or help us.'

Here is evidence enough that the church denies your charge. The burden of proof is on you, and you must prove her guilty of superstition and idolatry."

"And I am ready to prove it. The reformers charged her with idolatry, and we have never ceased from their day to reiterate the charge."

"But a lie, though a million of times repeated, is none the less a lie. Nobody disputes that Protestants have accused the church of idolatry, but that is not to the purpose. You must prove your allegation."

"Why, you might as well ask me to prove that there is a sun in the heavens. All the world knows that the church of Rome is sunk in the grossest idolatry and the foulest superstition."

"Words, words, brother; give me the proofs."

"Proofs! you need no proofs. The fact is undeniable, and nothing but the grossest impudence on the part of the Romish Church could ever dream of denying it."

"No advance in the argument, brother. Have you yet to learn that the unsupported assertions of a man who admits that he speaks without authority are not proofs? Here is the church, on the one hand, teaching her children, in the very first lessons she teaches them, to abhor idols and all superstitious practices; and here are you, on the other, accusing her of superstition, and that worst and most abominable species of superstition, idolatry,—she in possession and to be presumed to be the church of God, and you presumptively a rebel against God, and a calumniator, till you make good your charge. Prove, then, the charge, or withdraw it."

"The reformers proved it, the greatest and best of our writers have asserted it; it is a question settled, *res adjudicata*. Has it not entered into history? Do you not read it in the very elementary books for children? Look at the great and enlightened State of Massachusetts! she prohibits by law all sectarianism in her admirable system of schools, and the introduction into them of any books which show any preference for one religious denomination over another; and yet she does not hesitate to permit the introduction of books which teach that Papists are idolaters and image-worshippers. Have we not, in every land where we have had the power, prohibited the Romish worship? Why have we, the only friends of religious liberty, why have we who have poured out our treasure and our blood to redeem the world from papal tyranny and superstition, why have *we* done this, but for the

reason that we have not dared tolerate superstition and idolatry?"

"Why did the Jews, God's chosen people, through whom the Messiah was to come, and who were hourly expecting him and praying for his coming, crucify him between two thieves when he did come, but on the pretext that he had a devil and was a blasphemer? Did the fact that they falsely accused him, and then crucified him on that false accusation, supported by false witnesses, render them the less guilty?"

"Do you mean to say that so many great and good men, so many pure and holy men, the glory of their age, their country, and their religion, have all conspired to bear false witness against the Romish Church? The thing is incredible."

"More so than that the Jewish nation conspired to crucify their God? I know nothing about your great and good men, your pure and holy men; but I know that whoever accuses the church of idolatry, or any species of superstition, utters as foul a lie as did the wicked Jews who told our Lord he had a devil, and that he blasphemed. No doubt, it is an easy matter to prove the church guilty, if all you have to do is to bring a false accusation, assume your own sanctity, and then conclude it must be well founded or you could not have made it. But your logic would be more respectable, if from the falsity of your accusation you concluded your want of sanctity. If the character of Protestants is a presumption against their conspiracy to bring a false accusation, the character of Catholics is a still stronger presumption against their having conspired to uphold and practise idolatry; for the great and pure and holy men who have lived and died in the Catholic faith, granting you all you can pretend to, are as a thousand to one to those of Protestant communions. But you forget that I was brought up a Protestant, and that to talk to me of Protestant sanctity is ridiculous. I am acquainted with Protestants, and with what they facetiously call their religion. Our dear mother, too, was brought up a Protestant, a Presbyterian, and yet what did she tell me on her deathbed?"

"What did she?"

"No matter now; but she did not die a Presbyterian."

"Did not? What mean you?"

"Some day, I may tell you, but you are not now worthy to hear."

"Did my father know?"

"As much as you, and no more."

"Did anybody know, but yourself?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean to insinuate that a Popish priest was smuggled into our house?"

"O my wise brother, you do not know all things. Angels of mercy, messengers of grace, are sometimes sent even where the ministers of Satan fancy they do and can find no admission. All things are possible with God, and nothing is too good for him to do for those who are obedient to his grace."

"Am I to understand that my mother on her death-bed renounced Presbyterianism, and became a Papist?"

"She did not die a Presbyterian. You may recollect, that during the last week of her life she refused to see Mr. Grimface, her old Presbyterian pastor."

"True, and my father and I thought it strange; but as we had no doubt of her being one of the elect, it gave us no great uneasiness. But there was no Romish priest within two hundred miles of us."

"I have no doubt that my mother died in a state of grace; but more I will not tell you, till you prove or withdraw your charge against the church."

"But why did not our mother tell us all, as well as you, of her apostasy?"

"She knew both your father and you, and that, if she had told you, she would have been denied the last consolations of religion; and after she had received them, there was no opportunity, till she became unable to do so. But your charge,—prove or withdraw it."

"I will prove it, but you must excuse me now. Our conversation has been long, and I am fatigued. But to-morrow, God willing, I will prove that the Romish Church is an idolatrous church."

"Be it so. But remember and prove it, or I shall require you to own that Protestantism——"

"Is of the devil. I accept the alternative. If I fail to establish the charge of idolatry and superstition against the Romish Church, I will consent that the reformers be branded as calumniators, and that Protestants are and have been from the first acting under the delusion of Satan."

"See that you keep your word."

The brothers separated for the remainder of the day, and James, though pleading fatigue, betook himself to his library to look up his proofs and prepare for the morrow. He felt

that all depended on the issue he had joined, and that, if he failed to justify his charge, he could no longer pretend to uphold the reformers. Hitherto his brother had kept him discussing the law of the case; but now he thought he saw a chance of entering upon its merits, and of introducing his witnesses. How he succeeded will be related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

"You will bear in mind, James," remarked John, on resuming the conversation the next day, "that you have pledged yourself to prove that the Catholic Church authorizes superstition and idolatry."

"And if I do not prove it," replied James, "I will abandon the reformers and the reformation."

"Since you prefer the charge, it devolves on you to prove it."

"That is not difficult. The fact is notorious."

"Assertions are easily made by the unscrupulous, my brother; but I ask for *proofs*."

"Proofs, proofs! I have them in abundance. What else are your prayers for the dead,—your invocation of saints,—your worship of Mary,—adoration of crucifixes, pictures, images, relics of dead men and women? What is all this, but the most abominable idolatry and superstition? What else is your adoration of the mass, and all the vain and empty ceremonies of your church? O, it is frightful to think to what horrible lengths idolatry and superstition are carried among you! What more besotted, than for a full-grown man to believe that the priest can make his God at will, to fall down and adore a bit of bread, or to imagine that he is worshipping God by kissing the crucifix and telling his beads? I hope, John, you, at least, avoid the superstitious practice of telling your beads."

"I say my beads daily for your conversion."

"That is enough; my charge is proved. When a man like you can do that, there is no need of other evidence to prove that your church favors superstition."

"It requires strong faith, no doubt, to be able to regard your conversion as possible; but all things are possible with God, and he has never been known to deny his holy Mother any request, for she can request nothing not in accordance

with his will. If she intercedes for you, your conversion is certain."

"Worse and worse. You confess all I need to prove my charge."

"Did you ever read the record of the trial of our Lord?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because you remind me of his accusers, who pretended to convict him of blasphemy out of his own mouth. Yet it is nothing strange or uncommon for children to resemble their parents. You say the church is superstitious?"

"The *Romish* Church, yes; and I prove it."

"What is superstition?"

"A spurious religion or false worship; a false system of religion, credulity, vain observance."

"You would hardly be able to convict the church, or to attempt to convict her, of superstition, under that definition, without assuming that you have authority to determine, or by which you can determine, what is true religion; which we have seen is not the fact. Allow me to suggest a definition a little more to your purpose. Superstition is a vice opposed to true religion, as the schoolmen say, by way of excess, as irreligion is opposed to it by way of defect, and consists in rendering worship to an object to which it is not due, or an undue worship to the object to which it is due. It is, on the one hand, the worship of false gods, and, on the other, the false worship of the true God, and includes all you mean by both superstition and idolatry."

"Very well; I say the Romish Church is guilty of superstition in the sense in which you have defined the term."

"Superstition, in this sense, divides itself into the worship of false gods, and the false worship of the true God. It will be well to consider each division separately. Let us begin with the first, that is, *idolatry*, or giving the worship due to God alone to that which is not God; or, in other words, worshipping as God what is not God."

"The Romish Church worships as God what is not God."

"The proof?"

"She pays divine worship to the Virgin Mary."

"The proof?"

"She authorizes prayers to her."

"Nonsense! prayer is nothing but a request or a petition, and may without sin or impropriety be addressed by one man to another. You might as well say, the constitution of the United States authorizes idolatry, because it recognizes the

right of petition, and forbids congress to make any law prohibiting the people from peaceably assembling and petitioning for a redress of grievances. As well say, every subject who petitions the king, or citizen who petitions the court or the legislature, is an idolater. Try again, brother."

"Your church honors her, a mere woman, as the mother of God."

"Well, if she is the mother of God, where is the harm in that, since it is only honoring her for what she is?"

"But she is not the mother of God."

"That is for you to prove. You must remember, however, that you are to convict the church of idolatry by the light of nature, and you can in your argument deny nothing the church teaches, unless it is forbidden by the natural law. Assuming the Blessed Virgin to be the mother of God,—as she must be, if Christ is God,—does the law of nature forbid her from being honored as such? This is the question."

"The law of nature, which, as you have agreed, forbids idolatry, forbids her being honored as God."

"Unquestionably; but does it forbid her being honored for what she is?"

"But Catholics worship her as divine, and pay her the worship which is due to God alone."

"The proof?"

"They call her our Advocate, our Mediatrix, and thus rob Christ of the glory which is his due; for he is the only Mediator between God and men."

"The only mediator and advocate, in his own right; but, for aught the law of nature says, his mother may be an advocate and a mediatrix under him, by his will and appointment; for she would then advocate or mediate only by his authority, and he would still be our only advocate and mediator,—since that which I do mediately by another, as my minister or delegate, I do myself as much as if I did it immediately. These terms, applied to the Blessed Virgin, no doubt imply that she is exalted above every other creature; but as her exaltation is that of a creature, and an exaltation not by her own natural right, but by grace, it by no means places her in the same rank with her Son, who is exalted above *every* creature, by his own right, the right of his own proper divinity which assumed humanity."

"But Catholics pray to her much more than they do to God."

"That may be questioned; but if so, it is nothing to your

purpose. You must prove that they pray to her as God, ask of her what may be rightfully asked only of God, and that they pay her honors which are due to him alone."

"They pray to her to have mercy on them, and mercy is the prerogative of God alone."

"Mercy, in the sense of pardon or forgiveness of sin, is the property of God only; and in this sense, Catholics never ask the Blessed Virgin to have mercy on them. But mercy, in the sense of pity or compassion, belongs to human beings. Thus we say, 'The merciful man is merciful to his beast.' To ask the Blessed Virgin to have compassion on us, and to intercede with her divine Son for us, to obtain his pardon for us by her powerful intercession, is nothing more than we may lawfully ask of our pastors,—nothing more than what the Scriptures say the Lord commanded the three friends of Job to do."

"The worship which Catholics pay to the saints in general is idolatry."

"The highest form of worship we pay to any saint is that which we pay to the holy Mother of God. If that is not idolatrous, then, *a fortiori*, not that which we pay to the other saints."

"But you honor the saints."

"And what do you conclude from that? Does not the law of nature command us to give honor to whom honor is due? What authority have you for supposing that we pay *undue* honor to the saints?"

"To honor them as God, in the place of God, is to give them an honor which is not their due, and is idolatry."

"Granted; but who so honors them?"

"Catholics."

"The proof?"

"Catholics may not honor them as the Supreme God; but they honor them as a species of inferior gods, as the *Dii Minores* of the heathen."

"The proof?"

"The fact is evident of itself."

"Not by any means. The honors the heathen paid to their inferior gods were different in kind from those which we pay to the saints, and, moreover, were paid as due them in their own natural right, and not as due only to what they became through grace. The heathen offered sacrifices, and therefore paid *divine* honors, to their inferior gods. Catholics offer no sacrifices and pay no divine honors to the

saints; they venerate them for what, through grace, they became, and they ask their prayers and intercession, which is no more than we may ask of the living, and is no more than your parishioners not unfrequently ask of you,—no more than you sanction whenever you pray God for your congregation, or for an individual who has requested to be remembered in your prayers."

"But you have no warrant in Scripture for praying to the saints."

"That were nothing to the purpose, if true. You bring your action on the law of nature; and when you find that under the law of nature you have no cause of action, you are not at liberty to plead some other law. If praying to the saints is not idolatry by the law of nature, you cannot allege it under the head of idolatry, against the church."

"But, unless the church has a warrant in the word of God for praying to the saints, she has no right to pray to them."

"And unless it is forbidden by some precept of the law of nature, you cannot deny her right."

"The Romish Church worships crosses, dead men's bones, locks of their hair, their finger-nails, and shreds of their garments."

"What then?"

"Then she is idolatrous; for we must worship God, and him only."

"*Worship* is a word of more than one meaning; it may mean paying divine honors, and also simply paying a civil respect, honoring or acknowledging worth wherever we find it. In the former sense, it is due to God alone, and is by Catholics paid to him alone, and never to the objects you enumerate. In the latter sense, it may be paid, and the law of nature requires that it should be paid, to kings, judges, magistrates, to our parents, and to whosoever by rank or worth is entitled to honor. In this sense, the law of nature not only does not forbid, but commands us to honor or to treat with respect such objects as are related to eminent worth. To honor crosses and relics of the saints, for the worth to which they are related, is, then, in accordance with the law of nature, and it is only in this sense that we honor, respect, or, if you please, *worship* them."

"But you do not honor them merely as memorials of a worth which was real; you pay them divine honors."

"False!"

"Not false. Witness the Holy Coat of Treves."

"What of that?"

"Multitudes, in the recent pilgrimage to it, prayed to it, saying, 'O Holy Coat, have mercy on us!'"

"The evidence of what you assert?"

"It is said so."

"By whom, and on what authority?"

"Do you deny it?"

"Deny it? Do you suppose Catholics are so besotted as to pray to what has no life, no sense, no power to help them, and that, too, when their church, as I showed you yesterday, positively prohibits praying to relics? The thing is impossible; no Catholic ever did, or ever could, utter such a prayer. You must not judge our people by your own. We preserve, and we honor, the relics of departed saints; they remind us of the worth of the saints; and when they do so, we pray to the *saints* to pray God for us, and procure for us the graces and favors we need. What precept of the law of nature does this violate?"

"Why not pray directly to God?"

"That question is out of place. Why do you ask a fellow-mortal to pray for you? Why do you pray and intercede for your congregation?"

"But you are idolaters, for you worship images."

"If by *worship* you mean paying divine honors, your assertion is false."

"Your houses and churches are full of images and pictures, and you kneel and pray to them."

"Kneel and pray *before* them, I grant; kneel and pray *to* them, I deny. There is a difference between praying *before* an image and praying *to* it, which I should suppose even a Protestant might understand."

"But you break the second commandment; and that your deluded followers may not detect the fact, you have expunged it from the Decalogue."

"We do not expunge what you call the second commandment; we only reckon it as a part of the first commandment."

"Nevertheless you break it, for it says, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.'"

"Graven *thing*, not graven *image*, is the correct translation, and more to your purpose; otherwise the precept

would not forbid making statues of Jupiter, Neptune, and other purely fictitious beings. But do you understand that precept to forbid absolutely the making and keeping of images, statues, or pictures?"

"Of course I do; I am not wise above what is written."

"Nobody asks you to be wise above what is written; the question is, What *is* written? Then I am to understand you to maintain that Moses broke that commandment when he made and set up the brazen serpent in the wilderness; that Solomon broke it when he placed the brazen sea in the temple on twelve brazen oxen; that it was broken by the images of the Cherubim, who spread out their wings over the mercy-seat where God promised to meet his people; that our stern Puritans of Massachusetts break it by suspending the image of a codfish in their State House; that Congress break it in ordering a statue of Washington; and that it is broken by that dog's head carved on your cane, and those lion's claws on the feet of your table?"

"No, I do not say all that."

"Well, what do you say?"

"Why, that the commandment forbids the making and keeping of images, &c., as objects of religious veneration."

"That is, 'Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them,' or, as the catechism says, 'It forbids making them, so as to adore and serve them; that is, it forbids making them our gods.'"

"But the Romish Church commands, you cannot deny, supreme religious worship to be paid to what you call the sacred Host."

"What then?"

"Then she is idolatrous; for she commands her children to pay divine honors to a bit of bread."

"False! She commands no such thing. She commands us to worship Jesus Christ, who is God and man, entitled in his own right to supreme worship, and who veils his divinity and his humanity both under the sacramental species. It is not the bread, for she teaches there is no bread there, but the Son who is consubstantial to the Father, and whom we are to honor as we honor the Father, that she commands us to adore. There is, then, no idolatry in the adoration."

"But her teaching is false,—the Host is nothing but bread."

"That is a matter which you, by the light of nature, cannot decide."

"But she must prove to me that it is not bread, before I can be bound to adore it."

"Undoubtedly; but you must prove that it *is* bread, before you can pronounce the adoration idolatrous."

"But I have the evidence of my senses that it is bread."

"You have the evidence of your senses that the species of bread are there, and that the church asserts; but that, under the species of bread, there is the *substance* of bread, you have *not* the evidence of your senses; for the senses never, in any case whatever, take cognizance of substances. You have, therefore, the evidence of your senses against nothing the church asserts. Consequently, by the light of nature alone, you can neither affirm nor deny what she asserts; and unless you can deny it, you cannot say that the adoration of the Host is idolatrous. If what she teaches be true, the adoration is due, and commanded by the natural law, which commands us to give to every one his due. Have you any thing more to adduce in support of the charge of idolatry?"

"Perhaps it is true that Catholics worship, in the strict sense of the word, only God; but, though they may worship the true object, they render him a false worship."

"That is, they worship him in an undue manner."

"Yes, that is what I mean."

"To be able to say that, you must first determine the *due* manner of worshipping him. But you cannot do this without authority, and you have, as we have seen, no authority, except the light of nature. Are you able by the light of nature alone to determine what is the due worship of God?"

"I am able, in some cases, at least, by the light of nature, to say what is *not* due worship."

"Be it so; what is there, then, in Catholic worship forbidden by the law of nature?"

"All her peculiar worship,—her saint-worship, her veneration of relics, her beads and crucifixes, her fasts and feasts, her empty forms and idle ceremonies."

"Her empty forms and idle ceremonies? By what authority do you pronounce her forms empty, and her ceremonies idle?"

"Do you deny that her whole worship consists of empty forms and idle ceremonies?"

"Of course I do. But be so good as to specify what you call an empty form, or an idle ceremony."

"The light of nature teaches us that God is not worshipped by mere show, by vain pomp and parade, and that no worship can be acceptable to him which is not real, in spirit and in truth."

"Granted; proceed."

"Your bowings and genuflections, your fasts and your feasts, are a vain mockery, if merely external, and the heart be far from God."

"No doubt of it; proceed."

"Confessions to a priest, external acts of penance, the repetition of *paters* and *aves*, and even the giving of alms, are vain illusions, and have no power to purge the conscience, if there be not genuine repentance, deep and pungent sorrow for sin."

"Nothing in the world more true; proceed."

"The heart must be right; there must be internal holiness, or all our outward worship will avail us nothing."

"As true as preaching. Go on."

"This is enough. In conceding this much, you condemn your church."

"How so?"

"Because all she enjoins is outward, formal, mechanical, addressed to the senses and imagination, requiring no internal purity and holiness in the worshipper."

"And where did you learn that?"

"Is it not so?"

"What proof have you that it is so?"

"It is what the reformers and we have always alleged against her."

"If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household! I have not asked what you allege, but the proof of what you allege, against the church."

"Do you mean to call all Protestants false witnesses and calumniators?"

"Is it more unreasonable to believe them to be such, than it is to believe that the overwhelming majority of all who bear the Christian name, or have borne it, have, for eighteen hundred years, or from the very age of the apostles, been sunk in superstition, and guilty of the abominable sin of idolatry? It seems to me much easier to believe that a Protestant can calumniate than that a Catholic can be an idolater; and in so believing, I believe nothing worse of you than you profess to believe of us."

"What else can one see in your worship than mere outward form?"

"What else should you expect to see in external worship but external worship? External is by its very nature external; and I am unable to comprehend how the church should have an external worship, and yet not an external worship. But if you had ever taken the least pains to inform yourself, you would have known that the church teaches all her children that no external act, which does not proceed from internal justice and sanctity, is, or can be, meritorious."

"You rely on the sacraments."

"Well, what then?"

"Are they not outward?"

"Are they not inward?"

"Does not the church teach that the child is regenerated in baptism?"

"She does."

"And it is no superstition to believe that a little water poured upon the head of the child, and a few words muttered over him by the priest, can regenerate the soul?"

"If you make the water and the words the efficient cause of the regeneration, it is unquestionably superstition, for none but the Holy Ghost can regenerate the child; but if you understand by the water and the words simply the medium through which the Holy Ghost is pleased to communicate the grace which regenerates, there is no superstition; for the cause assigned is adequate to the effect. The church teaches the latter; the former is the vain fancy of her calumniators."

"If it is the Holy Ghost that regenerates, why can he not regenerate without the water and words as well as with them?"

"That is a question which does not fall within the jurisdiction of the law of nature. You and I have no right to call Almighty God to an account, and to ask him, Why do you so?"

"But how does the church know that the Holy Ghost regenerates in baptism?"

"That is a question which pertains to positive revelation, and not to the natural law. The revelation is her authority for what she asserts, concerning which, if it do not contradict natural reason, the natural law enacts nothing."

"There are other sacraments."

"Certainly; but all are founded on the same principle, and are not the efficient cause of grace, but the media through which the Holy Ghost communicates the graces which our Lord, by his own infinite merits, has purchased for us."

"But anybody can receive the sacrament, whatever his internal disposition; and the efficacy of the sacrament does not depend on the recipient."

"Anybody can receive the sacrament externally; but nobody can receive any spiritual benefit from it, unless he receives it with proper internal dispositions. He who should approach the sacrament of penance, for instance, without all you understand by *repentance*, would, instead of receiving the fruits of the sacrament, only profane it, and add to his guilt. In the sacrament of the Eucharist, he who eats or drinks unworthily eats and drinks condemnation to himself. The efficacy of the sacrament does not, indeed, depend on the recipient; but that the recipient may experience its effects, or that it may operate its effects in him, he must take care that he interpose by his malice no obstacle to its operation."

"But what is the use of your saint-worship?"

"That is not precisely the question."

"The worship, if useless, is idle or vain, and therefore superstitious. You must, then, prove that it is not useless, or you do not clear your church of the charge of superstition."

"You must prove from the light of nature that it *is* useless, or you do not sustain your charge against her. You bring the action, and the burden of proof is on you."

"I accuse the church of superstition; and I adduce as proof of my accusation the worship of the saints, which she authorizes."

"But you cannot adduce your accusation in proof of your accusation. The *cultus sanctorum* is conceded to be authorized by the church, and the very point in dispute is, Whether that is or is not superstitious. It is only on the assumption that it is, that you can conclude from it that the church is superstitious. To assume that it is superstitious is to assume what is in question, which you are not permitted to do. You must, therefore, since the point is denied, prove that the *cultus sanctorum* is useless."

"Reason can see no use in it."

"That, if conceded, were not enough. You can conclude nothing against the church from the inability of reason.

Reason must be able to affirm its inutility, or it can affirm nothing to your purpose."

"But I must have affirmative proof that it is useful, before I can reasonably assent to it."

"Nothing more true; but the authority of the church suffices for that, unless you can divest her of her authority. You are attempting to convict the church of superstition, in order to be able to conclude against her authority. You must, then, prove that she authorizes superstition, as the condition of setting aside her authority, and, therefore, that what she authorizes is superstitious, as the condition of proving that she authorizes superstition. It is, therefore, not for me to prove that the *cultus sanctorum* is useful, but for you to prove that it is useless, and therefore superstitious."

"It is an undue worship."

"That is the point you must prove."

"Any worship which God forbids, does not exact, or approve, is an undue worship, and therefore superstition."

"Granted; what then?"

"What is your authority for saying that God does exact or approve what you term the *cultus sanctorum?*"

"Your memory is apparently very short. Let me ask you by what authority you assert that God forbids it, or does not exact or approve it."

"I find no authority for it in the Scriptures."

"That is not certain; but you cannot appeal to the Scriptures, for you have no legal possession of them and are not authorized to interpret them, and because you bring your action, not on the revealed, but on the natural law. Besides, the fact that you find no authority for the *cultus sanctorum* is not sufficient for your purpose; you must have authority *against* it, and you can conclude nothing against it, unless you find it prohibited by the law of nature."

"I know, by the light of nature, that God does not exact or approve, but forbids, all idle and vain worship."

"Undoubtedly; but what *is* idle and vain worship?"

"The Romish worship of the saints."

"That is begging the question, or making your accusation the proof of the truth of your accusation,—the ordinary Protestant method of proving what they assert against the church. But proceeding in this way, we shall never be able to come to any conclusion. Is not any worship superstitious in which the worshipper looks for effects from inadequate causes?"

"Perhaps so."

"Thus it is superstition to fear bad luck because we have seen the new moon over our left shoulder, or because we have begun a piece of work, put to sea, or commenced a journey on Friday; to expect to discharge what we owe to God by paying divine honors to what is not God, to please him by vain observances, or to obtain blessings by means of prayers to inanimate or senseless objects,—objects which can neither bestow the blessings nor intercede with God for them; for in these, and all similar cases, the causes are inadequate to the effects. On the contrary, in all cases in which the effects feared or expected are feared and expected from adequate causes, although there may be error, there is no superstition."

"Be it so."

"Then in order to convict the *cultus sanctorum* of superstition, you must show that the effects we expect from it are expected from inadequate causes."

"That can easily be done. The saints cannot atone for our sins, and be our mediators."

"Granted; nor do we expect any thing of the sort from them. All we ask of them is their prayers."

"Even that is superstitious, because the saints have no power to hear your prayers or to pray for you."

"How know you that?"

"They are no longer living."

"In the flesh, conceded; but the church assures us that they still live in the presence of God, and if they do, they can hear our prayers in him, and do for us all we ask of them; and how can you, from the light of nature, say they do not so live?"

"Your veneration of relics is superstitious, for you acknowledge that they have no life or sense to help you."

"We do not expect them to help us."

"Then the veneration is idle, and therefore superstitious."

"In the respect we pay to the relics of a saint, it is the saint we honor; and whatever we expect, we expect from the intercession of the saint, and through that intercession from God, who is honored in his saints, and who himself delights to honor them."

"But the superstition is in supposing that honoring the relics is honoring the saint."

"The law of nature teaches the reverse; for that teaches

us that honor to what belonged to another, because it belonged to him, is a pious and affecting mode of honoring him. Hence the universality of funeral ceremonies, the marks of respect which all men show to the relics of their deceased friends, especially to the remains of those held to be deserving of honor for their rank, their virtues, their services, their heroic deeds; and surely none are more deserving of honor than the saints of God."

"Your feasts, fasts, and external observances are all superstitious."

"How do you prove that?"

"They are all external and mechanical; and to expect spiritual effects from them is to look for effects from inadequate causes."

"The law of nature commands us to worship God externally as well as internally, and an external worship must needs be external. The fact, that what you object to is external, is, therefore, no ground of objection. Feasts or festivals are merely days set apart for public thanksgiving to God for his mercies and favors to us, in becoming man for us, in suffering and dying for us, in rising again for us, in sending us the Holy Ghost, in raising up and giving to us such or such a saint, &c. If kept according to the intent of the church, internal as well as external thanks are rendered by each worshipper, and therefore the observance of the festival is not and cannot be mechanical. The law of nature commands the giving of thanks to God; and perhaps even the mere external observance of appointed seasons for public thanksgiving is better than no observance at all. Fasts are for the mortification of the body; they are admirably adapted to that end; and the light of nature teaches us that the mortification of the body is wholesome for the soul. Moreover, to fast, as required, is also to fast with proper interior dispositions. You cannot, then, say, either that in them there is only a mechanical action, or that we look for effects from inadequate causes."

"But the idle ceremonies and vain observances of your public worship are superstitious."

"If idle and vain, superstitious of course; but how do you know that they are idle and vain? Our public worship consists of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, and singing the praises of God. These you have no right to pronounce idle or vain. Our sacrifice we hold to be a real sacrifice, in an unbloody manner, of a real victim; and prayers

and the singing of praises have, by the common consent of mankind,—the authority for determining what is the law of nature,—always been held to be appropriate parts of public worship. Much of what you call idle ceremony and vain observance is integral in the worship itself; and what is not absolutely essential is adopted for the sake of decency, solemnity, and the edification of the faithful."

"I am not edified by it."

"Because you are not one of the faithful, and do not worship. Satan, no doubt, could himself bring the objection to our worship which you do. Our worship is adapted to the edification of those who worship, not of those who do not."

"But your worship is calculated to lead the weak and ignorant into idolatry and superstition."

"It will be time to consider that objection when you have shown that a Catholic, by practising what the church enjoins or permits, is rendered superstitious."

"Your worship is exceedingly offensive."

"To whom? To Protestants? Then let them become Catholics,—especially since they have no warrant from Almighty God to be any thing else."

"Your church is exceedingly impolitic. The practices to which we object may have been very well in dark and superstitious ages; but men in this enlightened and scientific age demand a more pure and spiritual worship."

"The policy you would recommend to the church, then, is, to be superstitious with the superstitious, and irreligious with the irreligious? If her practices could have a superstitious tendency, it is precisely in a dark and superstitious age in which they would be dangerous, and when it would be least proper to insist on them. If this age be what you suppose, it is precisely now that they are most appropriate, as being in opposition to dominant tendencies. But the church is not reduced to the necessity of taking the advice of those who despise her, and very possibly the age is not so enlightened as it appears to those whose eyes are accustomed only to the twilight. Have you any thing more to add?"

"There is no use in continuing the discussion. Let me say what I will, you will dispose of it by declaring it irrelevant, or by a sophistical distinction."

"Do you keep your word, and give up the reformers and the reformation?"

"You have not made me a Romanist."

"I have not attempted to do that; I have simply demanded of you a reason why you are a Protestant."

"I have given you reasons which satisfy me, and that is enough. Each of us must answer for himself, and not for another."

"You pledged yourself, if you failed to convict the church of idolatry and superstition, to give up the Protestant cause. Do you regard yourself as having made out your case?"

"There is no use in multiplying words. My mind is made up."

"You have no right to make up your mind without reason."

"My choice is made. I was born a Protestant; I have lived a Protestant; and I will die a Protestant."

"If you choose death, you, no doubt, can have it. Almighty God forces no man to enter into life."

"I take the responsibility; and nothing shall move me."

Here the conversation ended, and the two brothers separated. John entered a religious house, where he resides, devoting himself wholly to religion; James remains the minister of his congregation. He has recently married again, and he appears to have forgotten his domestic afflictions. He continues at the head of the "Protestant League," is louder than ever in praise of the reformers and the glorious reformation, and more violent than ever in his denunciations of Catholics and Catholicity. Humanly speaking, there is no hope of his conversion. It is to be feared that James Milwood is the type of a large class of Protestant ministers. I would judge no individual, but it seems to me that the notion many people have that Protestants are generally in good faith, and ready to embrace the truth, if presented to them, rests on no adequate authority. So far as I have known Protestants, they are ready to say, as said a Protestant minister to me the other day, "I would rather be damned than be a Catholic."

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